

# COUPLES HIV INTERVENTION PROGRAM (CHIP)

## Good Evidence – Risk Reduction

### INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

#### Target Population

- Transgender women and their primary cisgender male partners

#### Goals of Intervention

- Reduce HIV risk behavior
- Improve relationship communication
- Improve partner interpersonal dynamics

#### Brief Description

*CHIP* is a couples-focused intervention that involves three counseling sessions. In the first session, couples receive informational counseling on sexual transmission of HIV/STDs, condom use, and HIV testing. The second session is an individual session and includes discussion of HIV risk in the context of a primary relationship. Participants also discuss experiences of stigma related to gender identity (for transgender women) and sexuality (for cisgender male partners) and its impact on HIV risk behavior and sexual health. In the final session, couples discuss and role-play the following topics: effective partner communication, active listening, conflict resolution, enhancing mutual support, and identifying personal and couple-level HIV prevention goals. Participants were given homework after each session asking them to consider the take-home points of the session or implement skills learned.

#### Theoretical Basis

- Ecological perspective

#### Intervention Duration

- Three weekly, 1 to 1.5 hour sessions

#### Intervention Settings

- Private office space

#### Deliverer

- Research assistant

#### Delivery Methods

- Goal setting/plan
- Homework
- Individual/couples counseling
- Informational counseling
- Role plays

## INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

**An intervention package is not available at this time.** Please contact Don Operario, School of Public Health, Brown University, 121 South Main Street, 3rd Floor Providence, RI 02906, USA.

**Email:** [Don.Operario@brown.edu](mailto:Don.Operario@brown.edu) for details on intervention materials.

## EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

**The original evaluation was conducted in San Francisco and Oakland, CA between 2013 and 2014.**

### Key Intervention Effects

- Reduced condomless anal or vaginal sex with primary partners
- Reduced sex with any casual partner
- Reduced the number of casual partners

### Study Sample

The analytic study sample of 112 participants (56 couples) is characterized by the following:

- 45% black or African American; 16% white; 14% Hispanic/Latino; 14% mixed race; 8% Asian or Pacific Islander; 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 50% transgender women; 50% cisgender men
- 31.3% self-identified as persons living with HIV
- Mean age of 44 years

### Recruitment Settings

Venues that the community was known to frequent (e.g., community organizations, bars, nightclubs, beauty salons) and through referrals from community members.

### Eligibility Criteria

Participants were eligible if they were age 18 or older, identified as either a transgender woman or cisgender man; were in a primary partnership with a transgender woman (if the participant identified as a cisgender man) or with a cisgender man (if the participant identified as a transgender woman).

### Assignment Method

Couples [N = 56 (112 individuals)] were randomized to 1 of 2 study arms: CHIP (n = 27 couples [54 individuals]) or a control condition (n = 29 couples [58 individuals]).

### Comparison Group

A single couples-focused general HIV prevention session which provided basic informational counseling on sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, condom use, and HIV testing, delivered by the research assistant. The content of this single session was identical to that delivered during the first intervention session, but participants were not given homework for subsequent sessions.

### Relevant Outcomes Measured and Follow-up Time

- Sex behaviors (including condom use during receptive and insertive anal sex or vaginal sex with primary partner; having any casual sex partners; number of casual sex partners during the past 3 months) were measured at the 3 month follow up which translates to 2 months and 1 week after the intervention

### Participant Retention

- CHIP Intervention
  - 67% retained at 2 months and 1 week after intervention
- General HIV prevention comparison
  - 70% retained at 2 months and 1 week after intervention

### Significant Findings

- Intervention couples reported a significantly greater reduction in condomless sex with primary partners than comparison couples at 3 months post-baseline which translates to 2 months and 1 week post-intervention (aOR = 0.5; 95% CI 0.3 - 1.0,  $p < 0.05$ ).
- Intervention participants reported a significantly greater reduction in having any casual partners than comparison participants at 3 months post-baseline which translates to 2 months and 1 week post-intervention (aOR = 0.3; 95% CI 0.1 - 1.0,  $p < 0.05$ ).
- Intervention participants reported a significantly lower number of casual sex partners than comparison participants at 3 months post-baseline which translates to 2 months and 1 week post-intervention (B = -1.5; SE = 0.4,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### Considerations

- This study did not meet the best-evidence criteria because the sample size was  $<50$  in both arms at the assessment with the significant intervention effect,  $<70\%$  retention rate per arm at each included assessment, and the assessment time point was  $< 3$  months post-completion of intervention.
- There was a significant intervention effect among transgender women that did not meet the sample size criterion of  $\geq 40$  per arm for good evidence: transgender women in the intervention reported a significantly lower number of casual sex partners than transgender women in the comparison group at 3 months post-baseline (B = -3.5, SE = 1.0,  $p = 0.01$ ). No difference was observed among cisgender men in the number of casual partners at 3 months post-baseline.
- A total of 120 participants (60 couples total) attended the initial appointment, completed the baseline assessment, and were randomly allocated to the CHIP intervention (30 couples) or control (30 couples). However, four couples discontinued the intervention and were omitted from analysis: three in the intervention group (one was determined to not be in a committed partnership and two withdrew from the study) and one withdrew from the control condition; the authors lack specific information about the reasons for withdrawal.
- CHIP is an adaptation of Project CONNECT, a couples-focused EBI in the PRS Compendium for heterosexual women and their male partners. The Project CONNECT information sheet can be accessed [here](#).

### Funding

National Institutes of Health (grant number R34MH093232 and U24AA022000; Support was also provided by T32MH07878 and P30AI042853)

## REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Operario, D., Gamarel, K. E., Iwamoto, M., Suzuki, S., Suico, S., Darbes, L., & Nemoto, T. (2017). [Couples-focused prevention program to reduce HIV risk among transgender women and their primary male partners: Feasibility and promise of the Couples HIV Intervention Program](#). *AIDS and Behavior*, 21(8), 2452-2463.

**Researcher: Don Operario**

School of Public Health

Brown University

121 South Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Providence, RI 02906

**Email:** [Don.Operario@brown.edu](mailto:Don.Operario@brown.edu)

