

A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF THE BRUTHAS PROJECT

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This study is a collaboration between CAPS and the California Prevention and Education Project (CAL-PEP) in Oakland, CA, with valuable contributions from our research consultant at Brown University. Our collaborative research team has spent the past three years developing and testing the acceptability and feasibility of the Bruthas Project, an enhanced HIV counseling intervention focused on African American men who have sex with men and women (MSMW), as part of a community collaborative research project funded by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP). This study builds on this previous work and rigorously tests the Bruthas Project in a randomized controlled trial, with continued funding from CHRP.

We will compare the Bruthas Project to a standard program involving HIV counseling, testing and referral to general case management services. The Bruthas Project enhanced counseling intervention sessions will address: (a) increasing comfort with one's personal identity, (b) establishing positive relationships, and (c) building safer sex skills. A sample of 400 African American MSMW who do not identify as gay will be recruited from the San Francisco Bay Area. After receiving HIV counseling and testing, half will be randomly assigned to the enhanced intervention condition and half will be randomly assigned to the standard program. All participants will complete baseline, post-intervention, and 3-month post intervention behavioral risk assessments using an audio computer-assisted interview (ACASI) that has been specifically developed for this population. A subset of participants will also complete post-intervention qualitative interviews to provide experiential insight into the intervention process. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced counseling intervention by evaluating our primary outcome, which is the reduction of sexual risk behavior among men participating in the enhanced intervention compared to men in a standard HIV-CT program. Our team works out of a shared understanding that service providers, researchers, and community members must collaboratively work together to create solutions that can mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS in the African American community.

SIGNIFICANCE

Creating and rigorously testing effective HIV interventions for African American men is among the most urgent priorities for the public health community. Among those at highest risk for HIV are African American MSMW who do not identify as gay, and are sometimes referred to as "men on the down low (DL)" or "DL men." This project offers an innovative, culturally appropriate, and feasible intervention for African American MSM/W, a population that is at increased risk for contracting and transmitting HIV, yet has had no interventions designed or tested for it to date.

PROJECT RECRUITMENT DATES: April 2008-January 2010

PROJECT WEBSITE: www.bruthasproject.com

PROJECT END DATE: June 2010