

## MEN OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC TESTING FOR HIV (MATH)

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Men of Asia Testing for HIV (MATH) study is a national collaboration between several community-based organizations, health centers, academic institutions, laboratories, and health agencies. Funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, this project will study the HIV prevalence, incidence, and behavioral correlates of HIV infection among 2,000 Asian and Pacific Islander (API) men who have sex with men (MSM). In other words, we are studying the scope of the HIV epidemic among API MSM and who is at risk for becoming infected. The study began in September 2004 and will be completed in 2009.

Participants are recruited into the study by community partners, and participants also refer other eligible people; they may be residents of any of five US metropolitan areas (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, and Los Angeles). The study visit involves completing a behavioral survey and taking an oral rapid HIV test; those who test preliminary positive also have blood drawn for confirmatory testing and virological studies. Our major research questions include: Which social and cultural risk and resiliency factors associated with HIV infection among API MSM? How do international travel and immigration patterns affect HIV risk? Who gets tested for HIV and what sociocultural factors impact HIV testing patterns (including being aware of one's HIV status and late stage HIV testing)? Various analyses are planned, including multilevel multivariate modeling techniques, social network analysis, and latent variable models.

### SIGNIFICANCE

MATH is the first national study of this scope in the API MSM population that will include multiple Asian languages and will also have sufficient power to disaggregate by ethnicity and country of origin. The research team has convened a scientific, community-based research consortium and will also evaluate the effectiveness of this model in building the HIV prevention capacity of seven community partners.

### INTERESTING FINDINGS

During one year of pilot testing, the MATH consortium recruited 72 participants. Few modifications to the protocol were made but we expended significant resources to build the community agencies' capacities. However, this effort resulted in increasing proportions of completed data collected. Overall, 5.4% of respondent data deemed of high importance were missing.

Ten of the 72 participants were recruited by RDS. The median number of other API MSM known to participants was 18. The mean and median age were both 33.0 (SD 11.2). Only 20% reported that English was the language with which they are most comfortable, and 70% were born outside the U.S. mainland. Ethnic identification included Filipino (41.7%), Chinese (13.9%), Japanese (9.7%), Vietnamese (9.7%), and Indian (4.2%), among other groups. While 36% reported lifetime bisexual behavior, 76.4% identified as gay, 8.3% as bisexual, 4.2% as straight, and 2.8% as queer.

Many (73.6%) reported prior HIV testing, although the average time since the last test was 4.6 years (median 1.6 years, SD 6.67). Twenty five individuals (34.7%) tested positive for HIV infection, including 22 who already knew they were HIV+. Three individuals (12.0% of HIV+ and 4.7% of the total sample) learned of their HIV infection for the first time. The median CD4 count in the sample was 343 cells/mm<sup>3</sup> (range 108-704). (*excerpted from "Pilot Findings from a Collaborative Study of HIV among Asian and Pacific Islander MSM" presented at the 2007 National HIV Prevention Conference.*)

**PROJECT RECRUITMENT DATES:** September 2006 to July 2009

**PROJECT END DATE:** September 2009