An Intervention to Increase Adherence to HIV-Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) among Alcohol and Drug Users: The Challenges in HIV/AIDS Treatment (CHAT) Study

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Background

- Adherence to HAART is an important factor in prolonging the onset of opportunistic infections and increasing survival.
- Medication adherence is a major medical problem in all fields (Cramer JA. Practical issues in medication compliance. Transplantation Proceedings 1999;31:75-95)
- Alcohol and drug abusers face even greater challenges and have long been characterized as non-adherent to TB treatments (American Thoracic Society, 1977)
- Alcohol and Drug use is associated with non-adherence to HAART
- Alcohol and drug users engage in high risk sex and have higher rates of HIV seropositivity

Objective

Describe an intervention developed to raise levels of adherence to HIV-ART and thereby reduce viral load among alcohol and drug using men and women in San Francisco.

Methods

Collaborative Working Group
- Community based organizations
- Clinicians
- Community members (PLWHA)

Decided on 6 topics most affecting adherence
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Side Effects
- Health Care Providers
- Support
- Stress
- Removing/reducing barriers

The Tools

Tool #1: Tailoring Regimen to Lifestyle
- Participant describes daily activities
- Identify cues that are linked to routine daily activities
- Discuss additional reminder strategies
- Plan ahead for changes in routine
- Action Plan

Tool #2: Managing Medication Side Effects
- Identify problematic side effects
- Review list of potential solutions (e.g. diet, Dr. relaxation, exercise)
- Reflection and summary of options
- Action Plan

Tool #3: Interaction with Health Care Providers
- Describe a positive and negative experience
- Contrast the two examples
- Role play for future interaction
- Action Plan

Tool #4: Social Support
- Mention situations in which people need support
- Use 3x5 cards to write down and review names of people in their lives
- Brainstorm ways to improve support
- Action Plan

Tool #5: Stress Management
- Identify and clarify the stress factors
- Strategies used in the past to reduce stress
- Identify what can & cannot be change
- Action Plan

Tool #6: Reducing/Removing Barriers
- Identify the barrier
- Clarify and break down the problem
- Strategies to reduce/remove
- Weight success
- Action Plan

Individual Sessions

- Sessions incorporate use of a tool(s) to help work through adherence issue
- It is possible that more than one tool is used throughout the 6 sessions
- Participants are encouraged to come up with their own strategies when discussing the tool
- Participants supported to voice the arguments for change to increase medication adherence and reduce alcohol and drug use (when appropriate)

Data from first 100 participants

Problems with personal organization (Tool #1) 38%
Problems with side-effects (Tool #2) 48%
Difficulty interacting with their HCP (Tool #3) 28%
No support from family (Tool #4) 32%
No support from friends (Tool #4) 29%
Stress Management (Tool #5) n/a
Reducing/Removing Barriers (Tool #6) n/a

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Conclusions

- The six-session intervention allows for incorporating adherence strategies within the context of alcohol and drug use
- Providing a non-judgmental atmosphere utilizing Motivational interviewing techniques may allow for self-examination of substance use (and possible decrease)
- It is possible to have a standardized intervention that can be tailored based on individual needs.