

Three Projects for Transgender Women of Color in Alameda and San Francisco, Health Intervention Projects for Underserved Populations (HIPUP)

Investigator: Tooru Nemoto

Project Partners: Mariko Iwamoto and Elnaz Eilkhani

The Health Intervention Projects for Underserved Populations (HIPUP) aims to improve substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs for underserved populations, such as transgender persons, Asian and Pacific Islander men who have sex with men (MSM), and substance users. Through collaboration with targeted community members, community-based organizations, and public health departments, HIPUP strives to have a significant impact on health promotion and human rights for underserved communities locally and internationally. Projects:

1. Team-I: Tooru Nemoto, Mariko Iwamoto, and Elnaz Eilkhani from the Public Health Institute (PHI); Alvan Quamina, Kevin Bynes and Andrea Horne from AIDS Project East Bay (APEB); Jose Armando Hernandez and Celia Gomez from Instituto Familiar de la Raza (IFR)

This collaborative project between PHI, APEB and IFR completed a randomized controlled study evaluating the efficacy of the Motivational Enhancement Intervention (MEI) and Brief Intervention (BI) to reduce HIV risk behaviors among African American and Latina transgender women. African American (n=66) and Latina transgender women (n=48) with a history of substance use were recruited through community outreach based on purposive sampling in San Francisco and Oakland. Participants were randomly assigned to BI (two-hour two counseling session), MEI (6 one-hour counseling sessions), or a control group (health promotion education). Participants' risk behaviors were assessed at baseline, 3-month and 6-month follow-ups using a structured questionnaire. Preliminary results showed that the MEI and BI programs were effective in reducing substance abuse and HIV risk behaviors for African American and Latina transgender women. The intervention curricula, sensitive to health issues of transgender women of color will be discussed in addition to challenges in conducting the follow-up interviews.

2. Mariposa Project: Tooru Nemoto, Mariko Iwamoto, Elnaz Eilkhani, Breonna McCree and Dee Ayap from PHI; Ragina Gibson and Carla Clynes from Health Right 360

The Mariposa project has been implemented to increase health promotion behaviors for transgender women of color in San Francisco and Alameda County in collaboration of PHI and Healthright360 since 2010. Our transgender Health Educators conduct daily outreach activities and recruit eligible participants in the Mariposa project. Participants are required to complete 3 to 5 motivational intervention counseling sessions after completing the intake assessment. The participants are followed up at 3-month after the intake. The project particularly aims to provide comprehensive referral services for transgender women to enroll in a substance abuse treatment program at Healthright360. Currently, a total of 98 have enrolled in the project and 19 enrolled in the substance abuse treatment program. Outreach and follow-up methods will be discussed. Also, preliminary findings will be presented.

3. Couple's Health Intervention Project (CHIP): Tooru Nemoto, Mariko Iwamoto, Elnaz Eilkhani and Sabrina Suico from PHI; Don Operario from Brown University

In collaboration with Brown University this research study aims to develop and pilot-test a couples focused HIV prevention intervention addressing transgender women and their male primary partners. In the U.S., transgender women are among the highest-risk group for HIV infection, and transgender women report most frequently engaging in unprotected sex with their primary male partners. Men who have sex with transgender women (MSTWs) have recently been identified as a high-risk population for the infection with and transferring HIV. Currently there are no evidence-based interventions to reduce HIV infection targeting the couple of transgender women and their male partners. This innovative study will adapt principles from empirically supported couples-focused HIV interventions in order to develop an intervention curricula to reduce HIV risk behaviors among transgender women and their male primary partners. Currently, we are conducting a pilot study, and plan to recruit a total of 60 couples comprising of transgender women and their primary male partners. Preliminary findings from the pilot study and focus groups will be discussed.