



XVI International AIDS Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Daily update from the Ontario HIV Treatment Network:

August 16, 2006

**CBR related topics of the day**

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2. [\*The Special Initiatives Program: HIV Prevention Strategies by Inmates for Inmates\*](#)
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**1. More than the usual suspects: Working intensively with substance users to create change**

Author: **City of Toronto**

**Background**

- Service users are often excluded from the research and policy development processes that affect their lives.
- Participatory approaches seek to minimize the power differences in society and empower oppressed communities, such as people who use drugs, by including them in such processes.

- This study discusses the benefits and challenges associated with using a collaborative approach based on the experience of substance users who engaged in a participatory process to develop the Toronto Drug Strategy.
- Semi-structured interviews that asked five adults and one youth asked to describe how they were impacted by their inclusion and participation as members of the development committee for the Toronto Drug Strategy. Key informant interviews were also held with the Project Manager for the Toronto Drug Strategy and a harm reduction advocate who was also a member of the development committee.

## **CBR Highlights**

- The results demonstrated that the participants were positively affected by their experience as members of The Toronto Drug Strategy development committee. Key findings from the interviews are:
  - o All participants commented on the negative social stigma attached to people who use drugs. Participants commented on the efforts of the committee to use non-stigmatizing language.
  - o The group utilized debate about language as a forum for building trust, tolerance and respect for the diverse philosophical divide within the stakeholder membership.
  - o Participants shared critical thoughts, experiences and opinions about the use of language, the development of critical discourse, the recognition of diverse perspectives/agendas, and the commitment to tolerance and patience.
  - o All respondents described a sense of inclusion and empowerment from participating in the development of the drug strategy.
  - o Several participants described how the power dynamics impact the participatory work of the committee. Most felt that commitment to inclusion and egalitarian decision-making kept the abuse of power to a minimum.
  - o Strong facilitation of the meetings contributed to a sense of inclusion and equity within the group. Participants felt safe to talk about issues without fear of reciprocity, legal or otherwise.
  - o Respondents identified potential barriers to inclusion/participation such as access to technology (e.g., email), adequate child care, adequate housing, lack of basic nutrition, transportation costs, health issues and substance use. Respondents unanimously acknowledged the support offered through the drug strategy process to successfully mitigate these barriers.
  - o Respondents expressed an increased understanding of the political and policy development process including the challenge in balancing competing social and political funding, goals and needs.
  - o All participants commented on their personal growth and the feeling that they had made an important contribution to social change.

## Contact Information

For a copy of the full report *'More than the Usual Suspects': Working inclusively with substance users to create change*, please email Janet Balfour at [janet\\_balfour@yahoo.com](mailto:janet_balfour@yahoo.com). For more information on the Toronto Drug Strategy, please go to [www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy](http://www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy).

## **2. The Special Initiatives Program: HIV Prevention Strategies by Inmates for Inmates**

Author: **Correctional Services of Canada**

### Background

- The Special Initiatives Program, provides an opportunity for inmates to develop educational materials and/or organize activities dealing with HIV (and hepatitis C, STI) prevention, for other inmates.
- To have a Special Initiatives project/activity considered for funding, the inmate(s) in charge of the project/activity complete an application form which asks for a description of the project, the project's objective, number of inmates involved in the project, estimated timelines, and an itemized budget.
- Inmates at 13 federal penitentiaries have taken part in the program, totaling over 3,000 inmates. Since fiscal year 2002-03, 21 inmate-led HIV/HCV prevention projects and activities have been funded through the Special Initiatives program, at just over \$51,000 in total.
- Some of the funded projects have involved the production of t-shirts and posters which have been shared with other prisons across the country, thus engaging several thousand more inmates.

### CBR Highlights

- Some examples of Special Initiatives Projects that have received Funding:
  - HIV and HCV prevention posters and rave cards
  - A booklet with articles on HIV and HCV, list of community resources and quizzes on knowledge of HIV and HCV
  - An HIV/HCV symposium
  - AN HIV/HCV interactive learning tool
  - Two calendars with HIV/HCV prevention images
  - A peer support group to increase awareness among inmates of HIV and HCV prevention, and living with HIV and/or HCV
  - T-shirts with and Aboriginal design and message encouraging inmates to get tested.
  - An HIV prevention drawing contest, with the winning drawing printed on t-shirts.

### **3. Community-campus partnership for HIV Prevention: A national collaboration for prevention targeting of HIV+ men of color who have sex with men**

Authors: **Scott Jacoby, M.A., Nick Metcalf, M.S.W., B.R. Simon Rosser, Ph.D., Brennan O'Dell, B.A., Laura A. Hatfield, B.S., and the Positive Connections Team**  
HIV/STI Intervention & Prevention Studies Program- Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health, University Minnesota.

#### **Background**

- MSM are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS.
- MSM and HIV/AIDS have been identified as a national priority by the CDC and the NIH
- Project significance: explicitly targets HIV positive MSM of color (most studies focus on HIV negative, and Caucasian men), addresses long-term behaviour change (most studies stop at 12 months), community involvement (most studies stop at 12 months or earlier), strong theoretical basis (sexual health model).
- Critical question: For HIV positive MSM: What is better at lowering risk behaviour in the long term:
  - o Programming that targets HIV positive MSM alone, or
  - o Programming that targets all MSM regardless of HIV status?

#### **CBR Highlights**

Lessons Learned:

**Common Mission-** Team members prioritized common goals that fulfilled both academic and community missions.

**Team Composition-** The team consisted of members with diverse expertise, including study design, curriculum development, cultural adaptation, and recruitment.

**Cultural Relevance-** Team members were given opportunities to develop cultural competency skills throughout the intervention development phase to create a culturally relevant curriculum.

**Recruitment Networks-** community-based organizations with pre-existing relationships with underrepresented communities were selected for partnership.

**Negotiating Conflict-** Common objectives that provided a clear decision-making model to manage conflict were established early in the collaborative process.

## Contact Information

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### **4. Street Smart: HIV/STI testing among Calgary street-involved youth**

**Catherine Worthington, Nedra Huffey, Bruce MacLauring, Dawn Dittmann & Stasha Huntingford**

Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary  
AIDS Calgary Awareness Association

#### **Background**

- Street-involved youth face unique challenges in maintaining health and accessing health services in a high-risk environment.
- Little is known about street youth HIV/STI testing as a health maintenance/risk reduction strategy.
- The objective of the study was to examine the factors (including personal, street risk experience, and service use) associated with HIV/STI testing among street youth in Calgary, Canada.
- Community-based research methods were used to conduct a survey and 40 in-depth interviews with street-involved youth. The survey was developed by a team of youth/health agency representatives, youth, and university-based researchers.

#### **CBR Highlights**

- Trained street outreach workers collected anonymous surveys at a variety of locations (in all city quadrants; indoor/outdoor gathering places; agency locations; and shelters), targeting youth with varying levels of street-involvement.
- A high percentage of street-involved youth reported being tested for HIV/STIs, and were aware of HIV testing locations.
- Youth with street risk experiences and who had more contact with the medical system and outreach services were more likely to have tested for HIV/STIs.
- While it is heartening that many street-involved youth are 'street smart' with their HIV/STI testing, screening does not address underlying causes of HIV/STI risk, and service providers must address these causes.

## Contact Information

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## **5. Hope renewed: Home-based care for families living with HIV in Haiti**

Poster Presentation – **Andrinette Cadet**  
Plan International

### **Background:**

- Haiti has the largest burden of AIDS in the Americas with an estimated 280,000 people living with HIV out of a total population of 8.3 million.
- In Haiti, Plan International works with a local organization called the Maison l'Arc-en-ciel (MAEC). In 1998, MAEC began an outreach program for children and families affected by AIDS in some of the poorest and most unstable neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince.

### **CBR Highlights:**

- A group of HIV positive mothers met monthly at the MAEC outreach centre to discuss the issue of fear and stigma associated with HIV in their communities. From their discussions, the group suggested recruiting “Delegate Mothers” from their group to assist in home care tasks and support for households affected by HIV/AIDS. All of the women elected as Delegate Mothers were HIV positive and lived in the neighbourhoods where they would be providing home-based care to families affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Today, nine Delegate Mothers provide home-care to 165 families with more than 500 children and adults. They are trained in primary care and other home-care tasks.
- The Delegate Mothers take great pride in their work and the importance placed in their contributions has continued to motivate them, greatly increasing their self-esteem and given them renewed hope in their own lives.

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## **6. “Formal and Informal Responses to Depression among Aboriginal People living with HIV in Canada”**

Research Team: **Jackson R., Cain R., Collins E., Mill J., Barlow K., Prentice T.**  
Poster presentation by Randy Jackson

Affiliated Institutions: Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, McMaster University, University of Toronto, University of Alberta

**Background:**

- Aboriginal people living with HIV (APHAs) are over-represented in the HIV epidemic in Canada: While Canada's Aboriginal population is 3% of the national population, 9% of all new HIV infections in 2005 were among Aboriginal people- in other words the infection rate in Aboriginal communities is 3 times higher than in non Aboriginals in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006).
- The profile of HIV among Aboriginal communities differs from non-Aboriginal communities in the following three ways: women and youth are more likely to become infected and injection drug use is a more common mode of exposure to HIV.
- The study took place in six sites in Canada (Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg and the Atlantic region); 70 Aboriginal people participated with 12 organizations providing assistance and recruitment. This study was undertaken to understand how Aboriginal people living with HIV understand, describe, and respond to feelings of depression the preliminary analysis highlights participants responses to depression.

**CBR Highlights:**

- A CBR model was used and incorporated the OCAP principles (ownership, control, access and possession) which guided the development and implementation of the study. The study design received ethical review by Aboriginal people living with HIV prior to formal ethical review. The feedback obtained through this initial ethics review was used to inform the formal ethics submission to the REB.
- The results of this study found that depression is a very common experience among many APHAs, and for many predates HIV infection- and is intimately linked to a personal history of racism, discrimination, or experiences of childhood sexual abuse and/or neglect. An HIV diagnosis can further exacerbate this experience. Many participants reported self imposed isolation and alcohol experience of depression as a way to deal with such feelings.
- Although many participants reported using more Western approaches to dealing with their depression, many also identified that these often clash with Aboriginal values, identity and perspective. Thus, many participants reported simultaneously adopting more traditional approaches to deal with their well-being and feelings of depression that are more consistent with their cultural belief system. The three informal approaches identified by participants included: 1) being involved in the wider community for dealing with depression as it provides them with purpose, direction and a sense of giving back and reciprocity; 2) Using traditional ceremonial practices and forms of healing (including talking to elders, smudging and singing); 3) Using humour to ease the tension and lighten particularly difficult situations or experiences.

- Conclusions: HIV service providers need to more explicitly address depression in their work with Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS. Preliminary findings suggest a holistic service approach integrating spiritual, physical, mental and emotional needs may prove particularly beneficial. While Western therapeutic and medical approaches clearly have value, supporting Aboriginal identity, attending to their feeling of disconnection and isolation for community as identified by participants is something that would be particularly helpful.

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