



So you think you're safe?: Increasing awareness for HIV risk among women at a family planning clinic



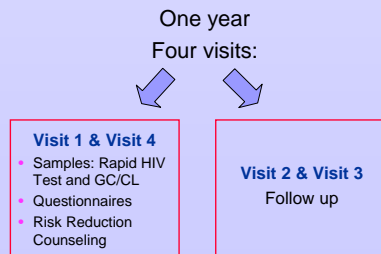
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Background and Objective: During the past 10 years Puerto Rico has ranked among the top five jurisdictions in the United States in AIDS cases rates, among men, women and children (CDC, 2007). Of the new reported infections in both males and females, 38% were related to IDU and 33% with heterosexual contact. Heterosexual transmission is the main risk factor for HIV infection in women (63%) (PR Department of Health, 2008). This is a significant challenge from a public health perspective and emphasizes the importance of studies focusing on risk reduction interventions and effective prevention strategies for women. The aim of this study is to develop and test an intervention that assesses STD and HIV risk in women with low and high risk for HIV and to demonstrate its effectiveness. This presentation describes the experience with the women in the low risk category.

Methods: A risk reduction counseling intervention for HIV, the Hispanic/Latino Respect was administered to 63 women from a family planning clinic considered at low risk for acquiring HIV and STDs. This longitudinal study consisted of four visits per participant over a one year period. During the first and fourth visits, HIV pre counseling was performed. This assessed the participant's knowledge and current risks of HIV/STDs, risk reduction techniques, future plans, support networks, myths, and worries about HIV. A rapid HIV test was performed with a post counseling session. The participants were contacted within a three month interval for all follow up visits, were their risk reduction plan was evaluated.

Procedure



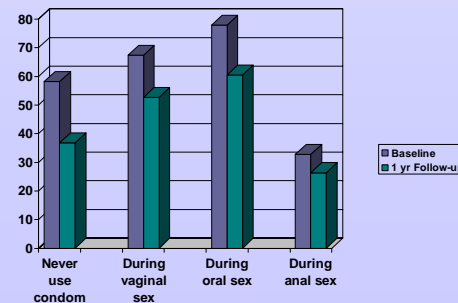
Participant Profile

Mean age	28
Age range	21 - 52
Education	
High school	25.3%
Undergraduate studies	50.8%
Graduate studies	19%

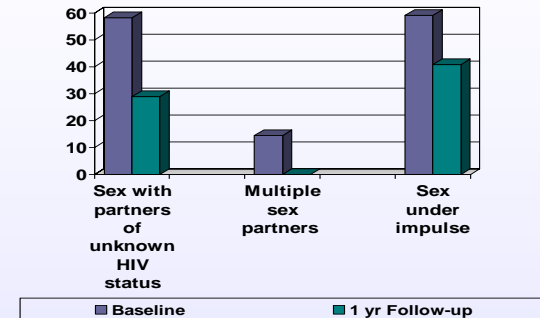
Income Profile

Family income	
Less than \$600	35%
\$601 - \$900	11.1%
\$901 - \$1,200	15.9%
> \$1,200	38.1%
Marital status	
Single	46.0%
Married	25.4%
Consensual relationship	17.5%

Risk Behaviors



Risk Behaviors



Results: This intervention has proven to be effective reducing STD risk behaviors.

The participants recognized that some of their behaviors were risky and after receiving the Hispanic/Latino Respect intervention they engaged in safer sexual practices.

During the post intervention the participants expressed greater awareness towards STDs and ways to protect themselves, for example, getting regular HIV testing, using condoms or avoiding unprotected sex before both parts get tested.

This applied to females who were either in a steady relationship or single.

Conclusions: The Hispanic/Latino Respect can be used as a routine preventive tool to diminish the impact of the HIV transmission among women. This intervention has proven effective assessing HIV and STDs risk among women with varying levels of risks in a non threatening manner.

Women's positive responsiveness towards this intervention was perceived as well as increased awareness of risk perception and risk reducing behaviors.

After a one year follow-up all the participants recognized their risk behaviors for HIV and adopted safer sexual practices.

Recommendations: It is necessary that STD/HIV prevention strategies be developed with emphasis on access to preventive materials and self-awareness of risk strategies to develop negotiation skills in women.

The Hispanic- Latino Respect is an effective intervention to enhance safe sexual health practices among women at risk for HIV in Puerto Rico.

This intervention can be used as a framework to work with other Hispanic/Latino populations as a tool for implementing a useful prevention strategy against HIV epidemic.

New interventions like the Hispanic/Latino Respect, should be tested in diverse populations in order to make it more accessible to the rest of the community.