In the United States, African-Americans, Latinos, and women frequently undergo HIV testing only after the development of symptoms. The elevated testing of individuals at higher risk for HIV in non-traditional settings has the potential to reduce HIV-associated morbidity and mortality and reduce transmission.

Methamphetamine use has been definitively linked to an increased risk for transmission.

The primary objective of this study was to understand the risk factors for HIV in women and Latino men who use methamphetamine, and to determine the acceptability of HIV testing in these groups. Rlacing these communities can be challenging to recruit. Mariposa Lodge and Vida Nueva, both of which house a large number of women and Latinos who use methamphetamine, were identified as two suitable subject recruitment sites.

The Stanford/Santa Clara County Methamphetamine Task Force was founded in 2004 with the mission of reducing methamphetamine use in the county, and in doing so, reducing the transmission of HIV. Utilizing research and education as vehicles to accomplish its goals, the Task Force has reached vulnerable communities through talks, social media, and the internet (www.methproject.org). The Task Force has also published findings through scholarly and academic conferences, thus reaching educators, policy-makers, and practice, in turn. The study investigators identified the Task Force as a unique local entity able to accomplish the objectives set forth in the research proposal.

For the “Fall Sessions,” there were no significant correlations between high-risk behaviors and a history of HIV testing. Women had higher baseline information regarding HIV. Despite the “Fall Sessions” being focused on methamphetamine and sex only, the questionnaire-and-answer period (which was open to any type of question) increased HIV knowledge significantly for the men (14.5 to 18.2, p < 0.05). For the women, their scores improved, however the results were not statistically significant (19.1 to 20.9, p = 0.5).

In the “Spring Sessions,” the women’s HIV knowledge score increased over baseline (19.9 to 21.5; p < 0.05), as did the Latino men’s (17.9 to 19.9; p< 0.01). As for the “Fall Sessions,” there was no significant correlation between high-risk behaviors and history of HIV testing.

The secondary objective, to assess the acceptability of HIV testing following attendance in this program, was disappointing. Only 10% of subjects who had their HIV test performed, as far as the study authors knew. He was a male from the Fall cohort. Demographically, he was 23 year old, unemployed in a restaurant, did not graduate from high school, and did not even have a subject identification number. Participation and testing were voluntary and anonymous.

The community member who co-presented disclosed his own history of methamphetamine use, as well as his sexual history (heterosexual with MSM contacts and outreach). The community educator was 23 year old, employed in a restaurant, did not graduate from high school, had no male sexual contact, and used condoms when he had sex. According to those data, this was in the lower-risk group. His pre-test and post-test results were exactly the same (18).

The presentations were well-received based on the enthusiasm of the audiences. Questions were frank. The community member who co-presented disclosed his own history of methamphetamine use, as well as his sexual history (heterosexual with MSM contacts and outreach). The community educator was 23 year old, employed in a restaurant, did not graduate from high school, had no male sexual contact, and used condoms when he had sex. According to those data, this was in the lower-risk group. His pre-test and post-test results were exactly the same (18).

The most significant results were positive. Subjects were asked to rate their knowledge and attitudes about HIV, and history of previous HIV testing. We evaluated the effectiveness of educational sessions presented by a bilingual psychiatrist and a community educator.

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New in the 30th year, Vida Nueva is an SLE in East San Jose which has helped more than 3,000 adult males. The bilingual/bicultural staff provides pre-level resources specializing in multi-cultural competence for Hispanics.