



INTRODUCTION

Women living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. are disproportionately of minority race/ethnicity. Some of the same factors that make minority women vulnerable to HIV, namely stigma and a fear of disclosing their HIV status, also serve as barriers to accessing and remaining in HIV care. Higher retention rates in care ultimately translate to higher survival rates.

Healthy Relationships (HR) is a small-group, evidence-based behavioral intervention for men and women living with HIV that is designed to help them cope with HIV stressors, reduce sexual-risk taking and enhance decision-making concerning disclosure of their HIV status.

Healthy Relationships is being implemented in the San Antonio TGA as part of a federally-funded multicomponent intervention, Women’s HEART, designed to actively engage and retain disenfranchised minority women in quality primary care. The four components of Women’s HEART include: medical coordination, intense outreach, patient navigation, and peer advocacy/education (including *Healthy Relationships*).

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance decision making about disclosure of HIV status
- Build coping skills to manage stress that can contribute to sexual risk behaviors



METHODS

Curriculum overview

- Five sessions-- only women living with HIV/AIDS
- Small group format- no more than 12 per group
- Impart five coping skills: 1) awareness; 2) triggers and barriers identification; 3) problem-solving; 4) decision-making, and 5) action

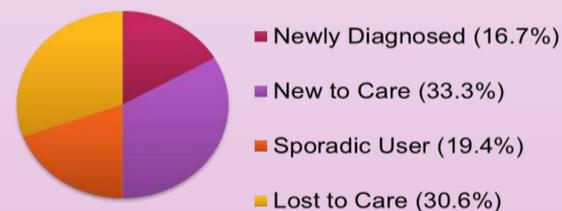
HEART adaptations

- 2 facilitators (1 mental health counselor, 1 peer educator) PLUS 2 assistants (i.e. other Women’s Heart staff)
- Cannot miss the first two sessions
- Added a sixth session on topics of interest/need (e.g., Ask a Doctor, Taking your Meds)

Participants

- 3 cohorts of women to date (n = 36)
- Mean age = 35.69 years; 69% Latina, 31% A A

Fig. 1: Clinic User Type



RESULTS

Satisfaction

- Participants who attend classes beyond the second session had very positive feedback about their experience (See Table 1 below.) One woman said she had been through HR twice before (elsewhere) and this group was “by far the best.”

Knowledge

- Pre-post 5-item knowledge quiz was administered for each of the five classes.
- There was a marginally significant increase in knowledge for participants at the end of Session 1
- $M_{pre} = 3.05$, $M_{post} = 3.67$, $t = 2.07$, $df = 14$, $p = .057$.

Implementation Fidelity

- Non-HR staff rate fidelity of each session. Each session has been rated to date as having “adequate” to “strong” fidelity.



Table 1. Women’s Healthy Relationships Satisfaction Survey Responses

	% Agree or strongly Agree
I learned things in class that I did not know before	92
I learned coping skills to manage stress related deciding whether to disclose my HIV status	98
I would recommend this class to others	100
This class will prepare me for making decisions about disclosing my HIV status to a friend or family member.	98
This class will prepare me for making decisions about disclosing their HIV status to a sexual partner.	94
This class will prepare me for making decisions about negotiating safer sex (condom use).	100

LESSONS LEARNED

Attendance Facilitators

- Assist with transportation
- Provide incentives
 - Meal voucher or actual meal
 - Raffle prize each session
 - Personalized gift basket at Session 5 for those with perfect attendance
 - Offer small monetary incentives for completion of evaluation measures

Group Process Facilitators

- Separate friends within a cohort
- Use more than two facilitators to enhance the implementation of the experiential exercises

Challenges & Vagaries of Implementation

- Time demands on participants- (almost a day)
- Time demands on staff
- Can be expensive to implement
- Some pre-preparation of participants may be needed, depending on group make-up (e.g. women are informed ahead of time about the make up of group in terms of inclusion of transgender, lesbian, or bisexual women).
- Depending on group members’ needs, language of materials may need to be simplified.
- Video clips dated; need to be more diverse



Acknowledgements

Alamo Area Resource Center
University Health System - Family Focused AIDS Clinical Treatment Services Clinic

Funded by Health Resources and Services Administration Special Project of National Significance, Grant # H97HA15154