

POSITIVE VOICES-JANUARY 2011

Your Newsletter by Positive People for Positive People

THE RISKS OF BAREBACKING 2011

November 17, 2010 (Denver, Colorado) Men who have unprotected sex with other men, commonly known as "barebacking," represent a challenge to HIV prevention activities. A poster presented here at the American Public Health Association 138th Annual Meeting showed that these men believe their risk to be low, when in fact it is high.

The study examined 16 Web sites that cater to men who have sex with men. Either they were geared specifically toward unprotected sex or they were sites with a specific opportunity to list "whether you are looking for safe sex only, unprotected sex only, or don't care," explained principal investigator Hugh Klein, PhD, from the Prevention Sciences Research Center at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. The "don't care" category had to include some explicit statement in the ad to meet the barebacking inclusion criteria.

The researchers used a strict algorithm to screen Web pages to ensure adequate representation by age, race, and geographic location (rural, urban, suburban), and it sampled at different times of the day. Coauthor David Tilley, a doctoral student at the University of South Florida College of Public Health in Tampa, said that interviewers were instructed to randomize by the first letter or number of the profile within their assigned ethnic group for that day, which resulted in a 26% minority sample.

It was difficult to compute response rates because some sites allowed the researcher to see if the person was online and/or if they had opened the email asking them to participate in the survey, whereas other sites did not offer that feature and email was deleted after a fixed period of time. Dr. Klein said: "My best guess is 10%, but it is exceedingly difficult to know."

Those who accepted the invitation to participate were then administered a structured telephone interview lasting 1 to 2 hours. Data from 332 adult American men who have sex with men were available for analysis. The knowledge part of the survey was constructed to minimize guessing by offering 5 possible responses: I know that it is false, I think it is false, I think it is true, I know it is true, and I have no idea, Dr. Klein explained to **Medscape Medical News**. "Out of 15 questions, the average man got 11 correct." This suggests a moderately high level of knowledge.

Nonetheless, one third of the men think that AIDS can be cured, and "about 28% believe there is a vaccine that can keep men from getting HIV, they just haven't taken the vaccine themselves. About 15% to 20% of respondents believe that HIV can be washed away in the shower," he said.

Surprisingly, estimates of their chance of becoming infected with HIV did not correspond with the amount of unprotected sex they had, the percentage of sex acts that entailed internal ejaculation, the HIV serostatus of the sex partners they sought, or the number of recent sex partners they reported.

Most of the HIV-negative men thought they had only a slight chance (43%) or no chance (8%) of becoming infected with the virus, "but they were actively seeking unprotected sex," Mr. Tilley said.

On multivariate analysis, only 4 factors stood out as being significant: identifying as a sexual "bottom" ($\beta = 0.19$; $P = .017$), recently having sex while under the influence of illegal drugs ($\beta = 0.23$; $P = .003$), use of bareback-focused Web sites to find partners ($\beta = .20$; $P = .013$), and being younger ($\beta = 0.19$; $P = .019$).

"Whether or not a man identified himself as a bottom was important," Dr. Klein said. "It indicates that there is some level of knowledge and understanding of the risk practices even in this population of men who are overtly seeking risk. They are aware of what they are doing and of the consequences of what they are doing."

"It suggests the need to work with bottom men to find ways that will help them feel sexually fulfilled and sexually excited without the willingness to receive semen." Dr. Klein noted that most community-based HIV prevention programs "don't often get into a sexual role-based intervention, which is what is needed."

"Generally, the younger men assumed themselves to be at greater risk, which is interesting because the younger men are not any different from the older men in terms of the amount of risk," Dr. Klein said.

"The men who are 50-plus, who remember the bad old days, are engaging in risk just as much as the men in their teens and 20s," he said.

"They had just as many sex partners, they had just as much unprotected sex, and they were more likely to be HIV-positive."

Mr. Tilley added that "research has shown that very few [men who have sex with men] talk about their sex lives with their primary care physicians. We have to address that issue first. Providers need to educate these men to just how much at risk they are" with these practices. "Just because a potential partner says he is HIV-negative does not mean that he is being truthful in his profile or that he actually knows."

Dr. Klein lamented the limited amount of data available from intervention studies, compared with epidemiologic studies. He pointed out that "it is easier to get a review committee to buy into a 'we need to understand' study than an intervention study, because they are brutal when it comes to who your comparison group is and how pure is it."

"The finding that people at high risk for [sexually transmitted infections] often have an optimistic take on their actual levels of risk has been noted many times over the years," said University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, HIV prevention researcher Ronald D. Stall, PhD. He was not surprised by the participants' low estimate of their risk for infection with barebacking.

"The variables that they found associated with higher-risk sex among barebackers also typically appear as correlates of risk for gay men in general. This raises the question of how exactly barebackers really are different from other high-risk gay men" he said.

Although the differentiation between tops and bottoms is interesting, Dr. Stall said it is still the top who needs to wear a condom if sex is to be safe. This would mean that understanding how tops, bottoms, and men who both top and bottom think about risk are all of roughly equal importance, even though the risk for HIV infection is probably somewhat greater for bottoms.

He agreed that creating effective interventions is the most difficult and valuable part of the equation.

The study was a sub analysis of data gathered under a National Institute on Drug Abuse grant. The researchers have disclosed no relevant financial relationships.

American Public Health Association (APHA) 138th Annual Meeting:
Abstract 3271.0-3. Presented November 8, 2010.

TAX PREPARATION WITH CYNTHIA KNIGHT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!, Cynthia Knight has offered once again to provide tax preparation services free for the upcoming tax season, starting January 1, 2011. Even if you do not owe taxes, you may be entitled to a refund if you had earned income, own your own home or pay rent. Clients, family, friends and significant others are welcome to attend

An information sessions will take place at the December 14th CAC meeting, after the Friends Dinner at Trinity Memorial Church at 6PM at the Oak Street side entrance, Oak and Main Street in Binghamton where the Thanksgiving Dinner was held this year. Dinner starts at 5:30 PM, then followed by Cynthia Knight's presentation and then you are welcome to stay for the December CAC meeting and see who it operates with all client participation.

If you cannot make the tax preparation in-service or if you have questions, you can call Candace at STAP at 607-798-1706 to make an appointment with Cynthia. This is a great volunteer service and we are always grateful to Cynthia for all the time that she lends to assist STAP clients.

FREE ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL RAPID HIV TESTING

Walk-in *Anonymous* testing is available in our STAP Johnson City office every Monday from 1:00-4:30PM and Thursdays from 1:00-3:00PM. *Confidential* testing is available in our STAP Johnson City office Thursdays from 9:00AM - 12:00PM. STAP's office is located at 122 Baldwin Street Johnson City, NY 13790. Walk-in *Anonymous* Testing is also available at STAP's Ithaca office located at 501 S. Meadow Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 on Tuesdays from 9:00AM-11:30AM, and *Confidential* testing can be scheduled Thursdays, 9:00AM-11:30AM. For more information and other testing opportunities available throughout the month, please call (607)798-1706.

NEW ONEONTA SUPPORT GROUP STARTING

STAP will be hosting a psychosocial support group for HIV positive individuals, their partners, and immediate family members. This group will be in session from 3-4pm on every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, beginning January 11th at the First United Methodist Church Parish House at 66 Chestnut Street in Oneonta. Topics covered will include: positive coping skills, developing and utilizing support systems, healthy relationships, setting realistic goals, dealing with stigma, disclosure, and identifying red flags to treatment adherence. Please contact Kelly Conroy, Medical Advocacy Coordinator, at 607-206-3418 if you are interested in attending

ON-GOING MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

JOIN CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE [CAC] MEETINGS

The STAP Consumer Advisory Committee is a committee facilitated by and made up of consumers (STAP clients) who welcome other consumers and their significant others, caretakers and family members to join them on the second Tuesday of each month. This collaborative effort provides a confidential space for clients to make recommendations regarding STAP client services and other programs in a non-judgmental environment.

The meetings are held following the Friends Dinner at 6:15 at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Call 1-800-333-0892 for directions or more details. If you cannot attend these meetings, mail your opinions or suggestions to STAP, 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, 13790, Attention CAC. CAC is encouraging consumers in other counties to organize monthly meetings in their area. Contact your case manager or Brian Wieder at 607-724-1272 to discuss developing CAC in your community.

DRAGON SLAYERS

Hepatitis C and Co-Infection Support Group. Meetings at 6:00 - 7:00PM on alternate Tuesdays at Trinity M, 44 Main Street, Oak Street Entrance in Binghamton. For information, call (607) 798-1706.

FRIENDS DINNER

Friends meet every Tuesday evening for a time of fellowship and good food. Join us at Trinity Memorial Church (on the corner of Main & Oak Streets) in downtown Binghamton. Doors open at 5PM and dinner is served between 5:30 & 5:45. No charge, just come with a smile and a friendly attitude - ready to meet and greet friends and have a hearty meal.

Parking is available on Oak Street behind the Church Annex. Use the Oak Street entrance for the cafeteria. Free bus passes are available for STAP clients! Call your case manager for details. Bus passes available for transportation to/from the Friends Dinner only. For more information call Bill at 607-724-0103.

FREE ANONYMOUS RAPID HIV TESTING

Hours have changed...please read the article in this newsletter for new days and hours.

ONEONTA SOCIAL GROUP

Oneonta Social Group every Saturday at the First Methodist Church, 66 Chestnut Street in the Dolly Room from 12:30PM-1:30PM. HIV/AIDS and affected welcome - Brunch is between 11:30-1PM. This is not an official STAP Group.

ASK THE MEDICAL ADVOCATES

Have general questions or concerns regarding HIV?
Want to better manage side effects of your HIV medications?
Concerned about interactions between your HIV meds and other meds that you take?
Want to better understand the results of your blood work or other lab tests?
Concerned about HIV exposure risks to your negative partner?
Interested in alternative or complementary therapies for HIV?

James Elrod, Medical Advocate (Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Tioga, Tompkins Counties) 607-426-9445

HOPE DISPENSARY OF THE SOUTHERN TIER

The Hope Dispensary of the Southern Tier, a service provided by Lourdes Hospital, is a new program designed to provide medications to those that are uninsured or underinsured and have a limited income. Here is how you qualify:

You must have no prescription coverage

Have a photo ID or Social Security Card

Bring one of any of the following as proof of income: Pay Stubs or Bank Statement, SSI/SSD paperwork or Unemployment or Pink Slip form from employer.

Bring proof of residency - one piece of mail with your name and address, such as a phone bill, NYSEG bill or cable bill.

Bring the prescription with you

If you need assistance with providing this information to determine eligibility, they have an onsite Social Worker who can help you with the process. There is a monthly income level that you cannot exceed. The information is listed on the next page.

Family Size and Monthly Income

1 = \$1,805 2 = \$2,428

3 = \$3,052 4 = \$3,675

5 = \$4,298 6 = \$4,922

7 = \$5,545 8 = \$6,168

The Hope Dispensary will verify your information onsite and the Social Worker that is present each day they are open will also provide screenings for financial assistance to access 50% discounted up to possibly free healthcare in the Lourdes network. This is great information!!!

Hope Dispensary does not carry all medications. They do cover HIV medication as well as antidepressants. They do not carry any controlled substances or birth control. If they do not have the medication that you need, they have programs developed so that you might qualify for free medication directly from the pharmaceutical corporations. They use medication samples and generic medications. They are located at 477 State Street in Binghamton and their number is 607-584-9376. They are open Monday through Friday from 10AM - 6PM.

New LGBT Information Site Launched

www.asaging.org/larc

The American Society on Aging has created a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Aging Resources Clearinghouse that holds information related to and resources for people aged 50 and older. The site's searchable resources span several categories: education and training; health and mental health; housing and support services; populations and communities; and public policy, advocacy, and legal issues. Also available are annotated listings for service providers, community and professional organizations, information sites, reports and articles, and links for ordering DVDs, books, and other useful products.

FREE CELL PHONES

There is a government sponsored program available that can provide you with a free cell phone and 68 free minutes per month. Eligibility is based on your participation in one of several State or government programs like PUBLIC HOUSING, FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAID and more. There is also a limit to the amount of income you receive each month. This program is called LifeLine Assistance and you can find out about it through safelink.com or calling 1-800-378-1684. If you need help with the application process, please call your STAP case manager for assistance.

Community Art Class at The Cube Taught by Angelo Fiori

STAP Board Member and Volunteer Angelo Fiori is starting a Community Art Class. It will be held at *The Cube* on Thursday Evenings, 7-10 PM as a weekly class at first. Depending on the funds raised and interest, it would be weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. The class would be open to all groups: HIV positive, HIV negative, LGBTQ community, gay or straight. His vision of this art class is to be one of and about our community and coming together to respect each other's differences. Please show up if you are interested in participating in this Community Art Class. The class will include drawing, collage, watercolor, painting and more. Beginners and all are welcome to participate to bring out their artistic possibilities and great discussions.

The Cube address: 208 State Street, Binghamton, NY 13901

NEWS FROM CANDACE ABOUT HOLIDAY EVENTS

I have tickets to the Madrigal Choir, series "Something Old Something New". They are good for one performance of any of the following:

Carol Journeys: Departures, Destinations and Dreams
Sunday March 20, 2011 - 4:00pm
First Presbyterian Church - 42 Chenango Street Binghamton NY

All's Fair: Songs of Love and War
Sunday May 22, 2011 -4:00pm
First Presbyterian Church - 42 Chenango Street Binghamton NY

Candace Phelan/Phone: 607.798.1706 ext. 225

POSSIBLE EMERGENCY PET CARE

The Prince Chunk Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that recently launched in June 2010. The Prince Chunk Foundation will enable pet owners to keep their pets during times of financial crisis by providing temporary assistance such as free emergency veterinary care and free pet food to pet owners so they never have to choose between caring for themselves and caring for their pets. According to the ASPCA between 500,000 to 1 million dogs and cats in the United States are at a risk of becoming homeless in an economic downturn. At this time we do not have enough solid factual information to give you, but we will in the next issue. In the meantime you can contact them at 1-865-302-6373 or info@princechunkfoundation.org should the need arise. There is a Facebook page for the Prince Chunk Foundation, check it out!

CONNEC+TIONS FOR POZ MEN AND WOMEN CONFERENCE CALLS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Central New York Connec+tions still has their phone lines going, one for Poz Women and one for Poz men and this would be a good source of fellowship and connection during the Holiday time. The call is toll-free and you need to register by calling the Central NY HIV Care Network at 1-315-472-8099. This is open to people from all counties, especially rural areas, so don't miss out on connecting with other Poz Men on their line and Poz Women on their line. The Men's line is every Thursday from 10am - 11:30am and the Women's line is every Tuesday from 10am - 11:30am. Space is limited on each line to 18 callers so call now and register.

