

SUBSTANCE USE AND HIV RISK AMONG HIV INFECTED AND UNINFECTED VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING (VCT) CLIENTS IN GERT SIBANDE DISTRICT, SOUTH AFRICA

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BACKGROUND

Substance use can contribute to unsafe sexual activities and as a result to new HIV infections. It reduces people's commitment to practice safer sex. This paper assesses substance use and HIV risk among HIV infected and uninfected VCT clients in Gert Sibande district, South Africa.

METHODS

The study included a cross-sectional sample of 300 HIV negative and 300 HIV positive clients recruited and interviewed consecutively after post-test counselling from 20 VCT sites in the Albert Luthuli sub-district, Mpumalanga.

ANALYSIS

Data was captured and analysed descriptively and analytically using SPSS version 16.0. Risk measures were calculated and compared between concerned variables (See table 2).

RESULTS

The study participants were mainly women (70.1%), aged 26-35 years (26.1%), 21-25 (21.4%), and most (71.5%) had secondary education, mostly Black (98.8%), mostly unmarried (83.2%) and unemployed (72.2%).

Table 1: HIV risk by sex of VCT clients

| | Total | | Male | | Female | |
|---|-------|------|------|------|--------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Risky drinking | 101 | 17.7 | 57 | 33.3 | 44 | 11.0 |
| Binge drinking in the past month | 60 | 30.9 | 34 | 40.5 | 26 | 23.6 |
| I avoided drinking or using drugs before sex in the past month | 467 | 80.4 | 124 | 71.3 | 343 | 84.3 |
| Use of alcohol or drugs before sex in the past month | 56 | 11.5 | 40 | 27.8 | 16 | 4.7 |
| Multiple sex partners (two or more partners in the past 3 months) | 74 | 16.7 | 43 | 32.6 | 31 | 10.0 |
| Non-Condom use at last sex | 280 | 57.9 | 83 | 57.6 | 197 | 57.9 |

Among 412 women (70.1%) and 176 men (29.9%), 17.7% engaged in risky drinking, binge drinking in the past month (30.9%), 11.5% used alcohol or drugs before sex in the past month, 16.7% had multiple sex partners (in the past 3 months), and 57.9% admitted to non-condom use at last sex. Male VCT clients engaged in more risky drinking and risky sex than female clients.

Table 2: Risk measures between HIV status; condom-use at last sex; multiple sexual partners; and Substance Use

| | N | | OR (95% CI) | P-value |
|--|------------|----------------|------------------|---------|
| | HIV+ | HIV- | | |
| Risky drinking | 47 | 54 | 0.84 (0.55-1.29) | 0.432 |
| Binge drinking | 27 | 33 | 0.91 (0.49-1.67) | 0.752 |
| Alcohol/drug use before sex in the past month | 36 | 20 | 1.83 (1.02-3.25) | 0.039 |
| Avoid drinking or using drugs before sex in the past month | 224 | 251 | 0.63 (0.42-0.95) | 0.028 |
| | Condom use | | OR (95% CI) | P-value |
| | Condom use | Non-condom use | | |
| Risky drinking | 25 | 30 | 0.88 (0.55-1.41) | 0.558 |
| Binge drinking | 31 | 22 | 1.36 (0.71-2.62) | 0.352 |
| Alcohol/drug use before sex in the past month | 47 | 39 | 0.58 (0.33-1.02) | 0.058 |
| Avoid drinking or using drugs before sex in the past month | 243 | 158 | 2.08 (1.30-3.33) | 0.002 |

| | N | | OR (95% CI) | P-value |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| | Multiple sex partners | One or no sex partner | | |
| Risky drinking | 23 | 58 | 2.40 (1.36-4.23) | 0.002 |
| Binge drinking | 13 | 35 | 0.96 (0.44-2.07) | 0.907 |
| Alcohol/drug use before sex in the past month | 23 | 26 | 5.90 (3.13-11.11)* | 0.000 |
| Avoid drinking or using drugs before sex in the past month | 48 | 313 | 0.32 (0.18-0.55) | 0.000 |

* Insufficient data

HIV positive clients are more likely to use alcohol/drugs before sex in the past month, while HIV negative clients were more likely to avoid alcohol/drugs before sex in the past month.

VCT clients who used alcohol/drug before sex were less likely to use condoms, while those who avoided alcohol/drugs before sex were more likely to use condoms at their last sex. Risky drinking and binge drinking were associated with neither HIV status nor condom use at last sex.

VCT clients who engaged in risky drinking were less likely to have multiple sexual partners, while no association was found between binge drinking and having multiple partners. VCT clients who used alcohol/drugs before sex in the past month were more likely to have multiple partners*, while those who avoided alcohol/drugs before sex were less likely to have multiple partners.



CONCLUSION

VCT clients who use alcohol/drugs before sex are likely to be HIV positive, not use condoms, and have multiple partners. The intergration of risk reduction counselling interventions in VCT sites is important as it can lead to reductions in HIV risky behaviours and further HIV infections among VCT clients.

LIMITATIONS

Since this is a cross-sectional study, causality cannot be determined from the variables being compared.

REFERENCES

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