Condom Use Rationale and HIV risk Behavior and Attitudes among Young Adult Multidrug Users in the Club Scene

The South Beach Project

A randomized clinical trial of behavioral interventions to reduce drug use and HIV risk among young adults in the club scene.

Background

Miami is an international center of nightclub culture, where alcohol, illicit drugs, and prescription drugs are often sequenced and/or combined. The tendency to mix numerous substances puts nightclub attendees at high risk for health problems; mental distress; unprotected sex with multiple partners; and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Characteristics of Young Adult Multidrug Users in Miami’s Club Scene (N=498)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean; SD)</td>
<td>25.3(5.398)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12 years of education</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose and Methods

**Purpose:** Although drug use is a well-established risk factor for HIV transmission, reasons for condom use in a heterosexual context are not well documented among young adults participating in electronic dance music (EDM) scenes who use drugs. We examined differences in HIV risk perceptions and sexual behaviors between men and women who reported using condoms primarily for HIV prevention compared to those whose condom use was mainly for contraception or non-HIV disease prevention.

**Methods:** Using respondent driven sampling, we recruited 750 heterosexual active men and women ages 18 to 39 who use club drugs (e.g., cocaine, ecstasy, LSD) and misuse psychoactive prescription drugs (Rx) medications (e.g., opioids, benzodiazepines). Participants also reported regular and frequent attendance at well known EDM nightclubs in Miami, Florida. The study is a 3-armed intervention trial designed to examine differences in behavior change by type of assessment modality (self- vs. interviewer-administered) and compared to a waitlist control. Data were collected in the two assessment arms (N=498) using identical standardized instrumentation.

**Instrumentation:** Participants were interviewed using a modified version of the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (Dennis et al. 2002) structured interview, which includes measures of demographics/environment, substance use and dependence, sexual risk attitudes and behaviors, and mental health functioning.

Results

Participants were interviewed using a modified version of the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) structured interview, which includes measures of demographics/environment, substance use and dependence, sexual risk attitudes and behaviors, and mental health functioning.

Analysis

- One way ANOVA and Chi-square tests were conducted with SPSS version 24.
- Variables measuring perceptions of HIV risk were four-point Likert-type scales ranging from "None" to "High" and were dichotomized as 1 = high or moderate risk vs. 0 = no or low risk.
- The mental health measure consists of 7 items inquiring about past year anxiety, depression and somatic symptoms; clinical serious mental illness is defined as 7 or more symptoms.
- The sexual risk dependence measure consists of 7 items, including withdrawals symptoms and tolerances. Substance dependence is defined as 3 or more symptoms.

Conclusions

Use of condoms primarily for HIV prevention was reported by 19% of the sample (n=96); no differences by age or gender were found. Black men (p=.007) and women (p=.027) were about twice as likely as those of other racial/ethnic groups to use condoms primarily for HIV prevention. Men, but not women, who used condoms primarily for HIV prevention were more likely to believe that they would never become infected (p=.007). Men, but not women, who used condoms primarily for HIV prevention also tended to report fewer unprotected sex exposures, and to perceive inconsistent condom use as high risk, although these measures did not reach the .05 significance level. Women, but not men, who used condoms primarily for HIV prevention reported higher numbers of recent sex partners compared to other women, to perceive certain condomless sex behaviors – pulling out before ejaculation and inconsistent condom use – to be of moderate to high risk of HIV transmission.

The majority of this sample of young adults reported using condoms primarily for contraception or for non-HIV disease prevention. Men and women who used condoms primarily for HIV prevention were more likely to be black, which may appropriately reflect greater exposure to the disease in their communities. There were significant differences by gender in the behavioral and attitudinal predictors of primary use of condoms for HIV prevention. The reasons for these gender differences are unclear, but understanding them may lead to better targeted intervention approaches.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by Grant Number R01 DA019048 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute on Drug Abuse or the National Institutes of Health.

There are no conflicts to report.

Contact

Steven P. Kurtz
steven.kurtz@nova.edu
arsh.nova.edu
7250 NE 4th Ave, Suite 112
Miami, FL 33138