HIV Prevention Needs of African, Caribbean and Other Black Men and Women: Findings from the BLACCH Study Interviews

Shamara M Baidoobonso
Daniel Pugh
The BLACCH Study Team, The BLACCH Study Team

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/shamara_baidoobonso/
BACKGROUND: Definitions of masculinity and femininity and gender roles impact how individuals access, interpret and use HIV prevention messages in African, Caribbean and other Black (ACB) communities. These differences must be considered when designing prevention interventions.

OBJECTIVE: To explore sex-based differences in ACB peoples’ HIV prevention needs.

METHODS: Using a community-based approach, a purposive sample of 22 ACB community members (CM) and 8 service providers (SP) in London, Ontario was interviewed about health. Respondents represented a cross-section of ACB communities and SPs serving these communities. HIV-specific topics included: awareness, perceived risk, behaviours, barrier to accessing services and service needs. Interviews were divided by sex (12 female, 10 male CM; 6 female, 2 male SP) and analysed using qualitative content analysis to identify themes.

FINDINGS: Men had greater awareness about HIV than women. Women believed their risk of contracting HIV was very low or zero due to marriage and abstinence. Men were more likely to recognize heterosexual, reverse heterosexual and injection sexual behaviours as risk factors for infection. Women also said alcohol and drug use were risk factors. Men and women said stigma and fear were barriers to accessing HIV services. Women cited literacy and discrimination as additional barriers; men cited mental health and culture. Women called for more condoms and Canadian HIV statistics. Men called for culturally-based services and family testing. Female and male SPs cited female disempowerment as a barrier to protection for women, and low condom use was a barrier for ACB men. Female SPs said ACB men need male SPs that they would access.

DISCUSSION: It appears that education, awareness, and empowerment efforts specific to ACB women are needed. Women need wanted about straight ACB men, and it is important to encourage them to access HIV services. A quantitative survey complements these findings; these data will be used in a needs assessment.

BACKGROUND
African, Caribbean and other Black (ACB) women accounted for about 52.7% of new HIV infections in women in Ontario in 2007, while the corresponding proportion attributable to ACB men was 10.1%. [1] The numbers of ACB men and women residing in Ontario are approximately equivalent.[2] The sex-based trends at the provincial level are mirrored at the local level. Social factors related to women’s experiences, and biological factors related to female anatomy, are believed to put women at greater risk for HIV infection than men.

Gender differences are believed to impact prevention efforts. Definitions of masculinity and femininity and gender roles impact how individuals access, interpret and use HIV prevention messages in ACB communities.[3] For instance, Black heterosexual men are never supposed to desire sex, even when it is risky, and they are supposed to take responsibility for condoms to women.[4] These differences must be considered when designing prevention interventions.

Objective
➢ To explore sex-based differences in ACB peoples’ HIV prevention needs by focusing on: awareness, risk perception, behaviours, barrier to accessing services and service needs.

Acknowledgments

Funding: the project was provided by the University of Western Ontario through a Graduate Thesis Research Award and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network through a Community-Based Research Capacity Building Grant. Funding for a student working on the project was provided by the Canadian Associates of HIV and STI Student Awards. We would like to thank the African Health Study in Toronto Team for their wisdom, guidance and survey instrument. We would also like to give special thanks to Robb Travers, Kimberly Gray and Winston Husbands for their advice and support.