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Exploring the root causes of HIV/STI/STD risks: A glimpse into the diversity of culture and society

Statement of the Problem: The HIV epidemic globally continues to disproportionately affect key populations, including heterosexual men and women, men who have sex with men, and substance users, among others. The focus here is on the way pre-established root systems in the life of individuals from diverse cultures and societies work in harmony to disproportionately burden key populations with varied health disparities, particularly HIV/STI/STD. Social and cultural predictors are rarely explored in established interventions. Incorporation of them in adaptation plans going forward may be a first step at identifying root systems that foster pandemics such as HIV/STI/STD. AS a result, future generations with like roots may avoid ever becoming HIV positive.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This workshop will utilize a discussion format to explore how elements of the sexual script theory (SST) and the theory of gender and power (TGP) intersect and are informed by culture and society. We expect the discussion to inform utility of a culturally relevant approach to HIV/STI prevention with multicultural populations.

Findings: The workshop will teach participants three objectives: 1) the complex logic model of sexual decision making of people from diverse cultures and societies, 2) Strategies to address challenges with facilitating behavior change that deviates from default root systems, and 3) explore the gap between 'real risk' and 'perceived risk' to HIV/STI/STD among key populations.

Conclusion & Significance: This workshop explores the root causes of sexual decision making prior to engaging in high risk sex behaviors. Major topics include normative, descriptive, socially and culturally supported approaches to sexual decision making in addition to selective perception. Normative models of sexual decision making include the SST and TGP. This workshop is important because it addresses relevance of a new theoretical framework, diverse and key populations, and offers literary support of vulnerability to high risk sex behaviors..

Biography

Mandy J Hill has experience in HIV prevention through formative intervention work that is designed to meet the people where they are, including the emergency department. Her current research agenda is to adapt efficacious interventions to varied settings where vulnerable populations at especially high risk for HIV infection can be accessed. She is trained as a Clinical Researcher and has advanced a prevention-based public health agenda within a clinical environment. She has published 24 peer reviewed manuscripts, 12 as the first author, in diverse areas addressing health disparities among minority populations, coupled national and international presentations and extramural funding support from the CDC and the NIH through the American Psychological Association and Centers for AIDS Research, as well as industry sponsored research. Her expertise includes randomized clinical trial development and implementation, and integrating public health-based prevention research into varied settings that include the emergency department.

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