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Youth of color's perceptions about how stigma affects HIV Testing

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Background: Youth of color are particularly vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV infection is increasingly becoming a concern among this population. In reviewing recent HIV infection and AIDS statistics, the burden of this disease is 100% preventable by re-engaging young people with the goal of raising awareness of HIV prevention through regular testing. However, stigma still remains a barrier in communities of color.

Purpose: We qualitatively explored the perceived socio-behavioral perceptions that impact the health and wellbeing of adolescent youth in Brooklyn, particularly outcomes related to HIV Testing.

Methodology: Convenience

and snowball sampling were used to recruit youth (n=10) from Brooklyn, New York to participate in a focus group. Focus group data were digitally audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using at last.

Results: Participants identified how HIV testing is important for preventing HIV transmission. They also identified risk factors for contracting HIV including alcohol and drug use, sharing tattooing needles, unstable housing, and multiple sex partners. Also, participants were able to identify stigma as a major barrier to getting an HIV test, hence increasing the likelihood of contracting the virus.

Discussion: In our sample, youth seemed to be fairly knowledgeable and aware of HIV and the related risk factors, however, when asked about what they perceived as a barrier to testing, they all identified stigma. We recommend that public health professionals continue their health promotion

efforts to reduce negative HIV outcomes in young populations. It is imperative, however, that more all-inclusive messages centered around dispelling myths about HIV testing become incorporated in health initiatives. More resources may need to be allocated to address this issue for this already underserved and marginalized community.

Biography

Adewale Adesanmi, MPH is a Public Health professional, whose passion and dedication to the public health profession is evident in his years of vast experience in preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting human health through advocacy and health education. His research topics include re-evaluating the Perception of the Male Role in the Dating Violence Paradigm: Men Are Not Always the Perpetrator, Dating violence and Sexual Health among LGBT Teens, Body Image and Sexual Identity among Youths.

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