PII-44: African American Women Living with HIV: A Qualitative Perspective on Facilitators of Self-Care

Author List:
Presenting Author: Kimberly Adams Tufts
Additional Author: Judy Wessell, Tanya Kearney, Edward C. Oldfield

Presenting Author: Kimberly Adams Tufts
Address: Hampton Blvd., 3124 Health Sciences Building
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
United States
Ph: 757-683-5011
Fax: 757-683-5253
Email: ktufts@odu.edu
Institution: Old Dominion University

Additional Author: Judy Wessell
Address: Hoffheimer Hall, Eastern Virginia Medical School
Norfolk, Virginia 23507
United States
Ph: 757-446-8910
Fax: 757-446-5242
Email: wesselja@evms.edu
Institution: Eastern Virginia Medical School

Additional Author: Tanya Kearney
Address: AIDS Resource Center, P. O. Box 1980
Norfolk, Virginia 23501-1980
United States
Ph: 757-446-6170
Fax: 757-446-6035 (fax)
Email: kearnetk@evms.edu
Institution: Eastern Virginia Medical School

Additional Author: Edward C Oldfield
Address: 825 Fairfax Avenue, Hofheimer Hall, Suite 410
Norfolk, Virginia 23507
United States
Ph: 757-446-8910
Fax: 757-446-5242
Email: oldfieec@evms.edu
Institution: Eastern Virginia Medical School
**Presentation Preference:** Research Abstract

**Abstract Categories:**
Thematic Areas: Women's Health

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Significant numbers of African American (AA) women have been diagnosed with HIV infection over the past decade. HIV may be viewed as a chronic condition that can be actively managed through the use of self-care (SC) behaviors. Yet little is known about how these women define self-care for themselves and still less is known about what facilitates and hinders SC behaviors among these women. The research question was: What factors facilitate the practice of SC behaviors in AA women who are living with HIV?

**Method(s):** Single-category design was used to conduct focus groups. The focus groups took place at a local HIV education, resources, and consultation center. Five focus groups were conducted; sessions lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours, 15 minutes. Groups were facilitated by the primary investigator with two co-investigators acting as note-takers. Sessions were also audiotaped. Data were analyzed using content analysis.

**Results:** The women spoke of a sisterhood of women who had the virus and those who do not. Thus, social support emerged as a primary facilitator of SC. Particularly the social support received from HIV infected peers and peer educators. Nine of the 21 participants were formally trained peer educators.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** There was a strong culture of peer support and social networking among these women. Several of the women equated peer educator training with helping them to make the transition from neglecting or sacrificing self to actively caring for themselves (“self preference”). The role of peer education in helping women to maintain their SC regimens and in teaching them the value of SC was heard across all focus groups. Peer education and training benefited women at several levels; peer educators also benefited from, “helping other women living with HIV.”. Recipients of peer support benefited whether as a result of a formal peer support relationship or informally via “girlfriend” relationships. The evidence demonstrated that peer support was a beneficial adjunct to traditional HIV care and treatment. Integrating peer delivered instruction and support into the HIV care and treatment plans could bridge the gap between medically centered patient education and community-based social support.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

**Financial Disclosure:**
No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.
FDA Disclosure:
I will not be describing any pharmaceutical and/or medical device.

Non-Exclusive License:

Submitted by:
kstufts@odu.edu