

SNAP! Seroconversion Narratives for AIDS Prevention

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Methods

- SNAP was a pilot and feasibility study of 28 recently seroconverted gay/bisexual men
- In-depth qualitative interview.

Recruitment

- Eligibility Criteria
 - Over 18 years of age
 - Able to communicate in English
 - Became infected with HIV in the past 2 years
- Three sources of participants:
 - Flyers in AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs)
 - Referrals from ASO clinicians and staff
 - Word of mouth from other participants

Interview Guide

- Each interview started with this question to elicit the Seroconversion Narrative:
 - “Tell me the story about how it happened that you were infected with HIV?”
 - Probes regarding details and context
- We elicited a Testing Narrative:
 - “When did you first test positive for HIV?”
 - Probes regarding details and context
- Current life circumstances were elicited with the question:
 - “What does your life look like now since you became infected with HIV?”
- Prevention practices as an HIV+ man were elicited with three questions
 - “How do you express yourself sexually now?”
 - “Have you changed the ways you use drugs or alcohol?”
 - Prevention messages to HIV- and HIV+ men

Sample N=28

- Average age was 34 years, Range 19-44
- Ethnicity
 - 11 (39%) Caucasian
 - 10 (36%) African American
 - 4 (14%) Latino
 - 2 (7%) Native American
 - 1 (4%) Asian/PI
- Time since seroconversion averaged 2 years. Range 7 months - 6 years
- 60% had been infected less than 2 years
- 82% had been infected less than 3 years

Data Analysis

- Interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim
- Each investigator read all of the interviews, discussed each interview and noted all themes that emerged
- Interviewers independently rated themes to select most prevalent themes

Next Steps

- Ongoing and Future Analyses
 - Identify Seroconversion Narrative Types
 - Identify Prevention Strategies as HIV+ man
 - Relationship between Narrative Type and Prevention Strategies as HIV+ man
 - Implications for interventions and research

Background and Significance

A seroconversion narrative (a person's story about becoming HIV positive) may be a useful tool in developing counseling interventions for HIV-positive persons in order to prevent HIV transmission. What actually happened is less important than the story each individual chooses to tell and how he tells his story. Narrative therapy is based on the idea that exploration and modification of people's stories (narratives) can lead to behavior change

Research Questions

- What are the common/recurrent themes in narratives of recently seroconverted men?
- Is there a relationship between men's understanding of how they became HIV+ and their current prevention practices?
- How can these findings be used to improve the effectiveness of counseling and other interventions?

Overall Themes

- Assumptions
- Disclosure/Sexual Communication
- Drug/Alcohol Use
- Loss
- Prevention Strategies (HIV+ and HIV-)
- Resilience/Coping
- Responsibility
- Abuse/Sexual Violence
- Internet
- Partner Choice
- Travel/Displacement
- Trust

ASSUMPTIONS

“Because I mean there's an assumption that a lot of people make when you look at their ads on the Internet or you talk to them. All of a sudden I was on the other side of the fence from where the guy was who had sex with me and exposed me to HIV. All of a sudden I was in his shoes thinking, “Wow, I can see it from this side too now,” which is really weird. Thinking, “I know why he assumed I was positive because I was fucking without a condom.” I'm like, “Damn, I hate that.”
(37 year old Caucasian man)

PREVENTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

“My dating habits have changed. I've just made the decision not to date HIV negative people so I have found that I disclose quite quickly in any type of possible situation. I don't want to date HIV negative people because I'm not a condom wearer. I never have been. I know that there are other things that I can catch out there. But I have no desire to be with somebody that I could possibly infect.”
(37 year old Caucasian man)

RESILIENCE/COPING

“I had a talk with God. I felt... trapped. So when I feel trapped I run to Him. Because He'll always be there. He knows my good and bad sides. So I took a walk with no alcohol, no nothing in my system. And I went down to the medical building. It was closed; it was like 12 o'clock midnight. And I took a walk and I talked to him and talked to him. I talked to my mom at the same time. And I got an answer and my answer was to Move On. My mom said, “Quit crying, you big old crybaby.” I said, “Momma I'm going to never cry no more. I ain't going to cry no more over this. Next time I cry it was going to be tears of joy” So I just decided ...I was going to move on with this. I was going to live. And so then I told my sister and them. I called them on the phone. And we all cried together.”
(40 year old African-American man)

LOSS

“I was in a relationship and it was going on three years. We were going to buy a house together and we were lookin'. One month while I was looking he told me he changed his mind... it kind of threw me for a loop. We had some big plans about buying a house and my mother moving in and stuff like that. And after he told me he changed his mind and wanted to move, our relationship just fell apart. And a week after all that happened my mother had a heart attack and I just went off the deep end. And I didn't really care what was happening to me and I just engaged in risky behavior. It was probably in a course of a month and a half that I was engaging in risky behavior. That's the basic story.”
(33 year old Asian-American man)

DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

“I would normally use condoms but when I was high on cocaine or drunk I didn't. So this could have happened to me much earlier, and it didn't because of a matter of luck only. I was risky myself. I know that. And every time on the following day, I always thought, “Oh you did it again.” But the fact that I've been doing it for one or two years and it never happened to me, I thought, I was doing okay. I was always careful with the guys I went with. That's what you think what a positive guy looks like before being positive. I thought they all looked very sick, like they were dying...so you knew that they were positive. So I was having sex with cool, normal guys who looked pretty healthy and were not sick at all. And if I was sober I would have used condoms, but I have to tell you, that when I was high, either drunk or high on cocaine or something, I never used condoms.”
(34 year old Caucasian man)

DISCLOSURE AND SEXUAL COMMUNICATION

“After he told me he was positive, it was another 9-10 months before I got tested. It didn't really slow me down sexually but I made sure that I wasn't doing anything that would put other people at risk. When people asked me my status I would say, “The last time I got tested I was negative.” But of course I didn't tell them, “I've had sex with someone that's tested positive.” So I guess it was a little bit of deception mixed with a little bit of truth.”
(30 year old Caucasian man)

Example from a SEROCONVERSION NARRATIVE

“I first got infected in 2001. It was me and my ex-lover. And it just so happened we was at his brother's house. I had tried to visit his brother and his brother wasn't there. And he just happened to come over too. His brother left and we were just sitting there talking and everything, you know. We went to talking about our past relationship and everything and we still cared for each other. And we ended up kissing and once we started kissing we ended up in the bed you know. Plus we participated in a little oral sex and then we went on to having anal sex.

“That was actually the day that I became positive. And then come to find out he's messing with this other guy. And you know that chain started. He infected my ex-lover and my ex-lover infected me. And it was ridiculous. To this day – well right now I don't hold any resentment or anything towards him. But it took me a long time because I knew that I was safe in everything I was doing. I was using condoms. And you know this is the only time I didn't use a condom...And I resented him for a very long time. But I respect him because he called me and told me “you need to go get tested”
(33 year old African-American man)

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and thank our study participants for sharing their stories with us.

This study was funded by the Universitywide AIDS Research Program (UARP), University of California, Office of the President.

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