

## VOICE: A Prevention Intervention for HIV Seropositive (HIV+) Injection Drug Users

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**Project Description:** The VOICE Project was a randomized controlled trial of a prevention intervention for HIV+ injection drug users (IDUs) funded by CDC and HRSA. UCSF was one site in this multi-site collaboration that includes New York Academy of Medicine, John Hopkins University, and University of Miami. The intervention sought to decrease risky sex and drug-taking behaviors, increase healthcare utilization, and increase adherence to HIV medications among HIV+ IDUs. Based on our formative research (the VENUS Study) we designed a peer mentorship training intervention that teaches HIV+ IDUs risk reduction and health care management skills while highlighting their importance as valuable mentors to other HIV+ IDUs. Because HIV+ IDUs often have problematic relationships with services, this intervention included an experimental agency volunteer component to increase service delivery knowledge, utilization and resource expertise.

**Significance:** While many studies have addressed the HIV prevention needs of IDUs, few have specifically focused on the risk-reduction needs of HIV+ IDUs. In fact, prevention needs of HIV+ individuals have been largely ignored until relatively recently. Attention to this population is critical because some HIV+ IDUs continue to engage in risky sexual and drug injection practices. Moreover, substance use, mental illness, homelessness, and other factors can make it particularly difficult for HIV+ IDUs to access and utilize medical care and adhere to HIV treatment regimes. Targeted intervention strategies for HIV+ IDUs need to be tested and disseminated.

**Interesting Findings:** 279 HIV+ IDU men and women were recruited from San Francisco and the East Bay. Demographics: 58% men, 34% women, 9% transgender; 65% African American, 18% Latino, 10% White, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander; mean age 42 years old; 71% history of incarceration. Participant retention was excellent, with a 91% overall follow-up rate and a 96% 12-month follow-up rate of reachable participants.

- Primary healthcare visits in the past 6 months: None = 21%, 1-3 = 30%, 4 or more = 49%
- Medication experience: Currently on HIV medication = 47%; Not on meds but CD4 count less than 200 = 9%; 100% adherence yesterday = 81%, past 7 days = 67%
- Number of sexual partners: 0 = 8.3%, 1 = 40.3%, 2 = 14.5%, 3 = 13%, 4 or more = 24%

**Project Web Site:** [www.caps.ucsf.edu/ppt/VOICE.ppt](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/ppt/VOICE.ppt)

**Project End Date:** December 2004