

Sexual Trauma and HIV Risk Behavior of Gay Men

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Project Description: This study will re-interview 2,200 men who have sex with men (MSM) from the Urban Men's Health Study to look at the relationship of child/adolescent sexual abuse (CSA) and sexual risk taking. Guided by social learning theory and preliminary research, we will examine differences between men with histories of CSA and non-CSA. We will interview MSM on HIV-risk appraisal and enactment of HIV-related sexual risk behaviors. MSM with a history of CSA, relative to other MSM, are expected to have sexual and interpersonal motivations, and coping strategies that predispose to lower risk appraisals for themselves and their sexual partners, and to have motivations, coping strategies, interpersonal-regulatory abilities and sexual scripts that facilitate high risk sex. A general model is proposed to accommodate the relevant effects of CSA on adult sexuality in the context of HIV risk reduction. Data on the prevalence of CSA among MSM attending social and health venues will be collected as an aid future studies and prevention efforts.

Significance: MSM have, for over a decade, sustained a high incidence of HIV, and continue to have instances of high-risk sex. In an effort to better understand the antecedents of high-risk sex, some investigators have turned to the study of sexual development including CSA histories. Several studies suggest that the prevalence of CSA among MSM is high (19-37%), and is correlated with higher rates of risk behavior and HIV infection. Although research on the antecedents of these relationships among MSM is limited, research on heterosexual women has shown that CSA is a significant correlate of cognitive, motivational and social antecedents of sexual risk behavior.