



Photo Ketut Subiyanto via Pexels

# Research for Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Prevention

**UCSF** Center for AIDS  
Prevention Studies  
Division of Prevention Sciences



# Black Gay and Bisexual Men

## We Are Family: Testing, Linkage and Engagement in Care among African American Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Youth in the House Ball Community

**Investigators:** Emily Arnold (PI), Parya Saberi, Susan Kegeles, Torsten Neilands, Lance Pollack, Michael Benjamin (CAL-PEP), Gloria Lockett (CAL-PEP)

This 4-year study was supported by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP) to develop and do a preliminary test of intervention activities that build upon forms of social support already occurring among young people involved in the house ball and gay family communities, specifically related to HIV prevention and care. This was a collaboration between UCSF, CAL-PEP, and members of the house ball and gay family communities.

Research findings: Many Bay Area houses, and gay families already share HIV prevention information and support with family members, helping their children and siblings connect to services. Building on family connections provides a natural forum to bring up the most recent prevention and treatment advances, such as home testing, PrEP/PEP, and U=U. Family-based support, reinforced by this intervention, is particularly important as many participants are impacted by gentrification and rely more on each other. Among the 120 participants enrolled in the study, 23% experienced homelessness in the past year. Connecting individuals to resources, within the community and through the health care system, is a key part of improving HIV prevention and care outcomes.

## The Bruthas Project: Sexual Health Promotion Counseling Sessions

**Investigators:** Emily Arnold (Academic PI), Gloria Lockett (Community PI), Susan Kegeles, Don Operario (Brown University), Tor Neilands, Lance Pollack, and Stephanie Cornwell (CAL-PEP)

Black men who have sex with men and women (BMSMW) are at high risk for acquiring and transmitting HIV, but few interventions exist to address their prevention needs. To address this, we developed the Bruthas Project, a series of four individualized sexual health promotion counseling sessions designed to build upon standardized HIV counseling and testing (HIV-CT). Using a randomized controlled trial, intervention participants received Bruthas counseling sessions whereas the control participants received standard HIV testing and counseling.

Research findings: Men in both the intervention and control groups improved on their HIV testing behavior, engaged in fewer acts of condomless sex, and reduced their number of sexual partners. This may be attributed to the powerful effect of providing culturally tailored and non-judgmental HIV testing and counseling to BMSMW, an under serviced population. The study found that BMSMW who are living with HIV are prioritizing their basic needs, such as food security and housing, ahead of maintaining their medical provider appointments and medications. Some participants end their HIV medical treatment because of side effects or interactions with other medications.



## Black Gay and Bisexual Men Continued

### PRC Prevention Research Center

**Investigators:** Greg Rebchook (PI), Janet Myers, Susan Kegeles, Emily Arnold, AIDS Project of the East Bay

This project addressed the significant HIV health disparities among African American G/B and MSM by strengthening community engagement and supporting implementation of evidence-based strategies and approaches. The PRC translated and disseminated HIV science, trained students, public health professionals and community members as well as continually evaluated its activities. In partnership with a community-based organization, we developed a toolkit to assist in the implementation of an evidence-based intervention, called [STYLE](http://style.ucsf.edu), for increasing the engagement of African American MSM in treatment and care. The implementation toolkit can be found at [style.ucsf.edu](http://style.ucsf.edu).



## Substance Use

### The PACE Study: Pacing Alcohol Consumption Experiment for Gay Bar Patrons in San Francisco

**Investigators:** Edwin Charlebois (PI), Albert Plenty, Jessica Lin, Alicia Ayala, Jennifer Hecht (San Francisco AIDS Foundation)

Research has shown that drinking alcohol is linked to unsafe sex, less safer sex negotiation, condom failure, and HIV risk. The literature suggest that gay bar patrons are an important group to reach out to for alcohol and HIV risk interventions. The PACE Study implemented and tested a multi-level structural intervention among a sample of gay bars in San Francisco consisting of: 1) increased availability of free water, 2) messaging on pacing alcohol use by drinking water, and 3) normative feedback of blood alcohol concentration (BAC%).

Research findings: Significant differences on objective and subjective measures of alcohol use were observed. 30% of intervention bar patrons had BAC% levels over the legal driving limit, compared to 43% of control bar patrons. 78% of intervention bar patrons were above the AUDIT-C cut-off for hazardous drinking compared to 87% in control bars.

## Substance Use Continued

### **PARTI: Optimizing PrEP adherence in sexual minority men who use stimulants**

**Investigators:** Adam Carrico (PI, University of Miami), Mallory Johnson (PI); Susanne Lewis (University of Miami), Steven Safren (University of Miami), Judith Moskowitz (Northwestern University), Monica Gandhi, Tor Neilands, Kimberly Page (University of New Mexico)

One-in-ten men who have sex with men (MSM) newly diagnosed with HIV infection report recent stimulant use; stimulant use is a key obstacle to PrEP adherence and persistence. This multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT) is among the first to test a behavioral intervention for achieving increases in PrEP adherence among stimulant-using MSM. The PARTI Study will enroll up to 300 MSM on PrEP in South Florida and San Francisco who report stimulant use (methamphetamine, cocaine or crack) to test whether delivering a positive affect intervention during smartphone-based contingency management for directly observed PrEP doses achieves greater reductions in HIV acquisition risk over 12 months. Smartphone-based contingency management is a potentially scalable intervention that will be augmented by a brief, evidence-based positive affect intervention. Findings from this RCT can help the targeted distribution of public health funding to reduce HIV incidence in this marginalized, underserved population of stimulant-using MSM.

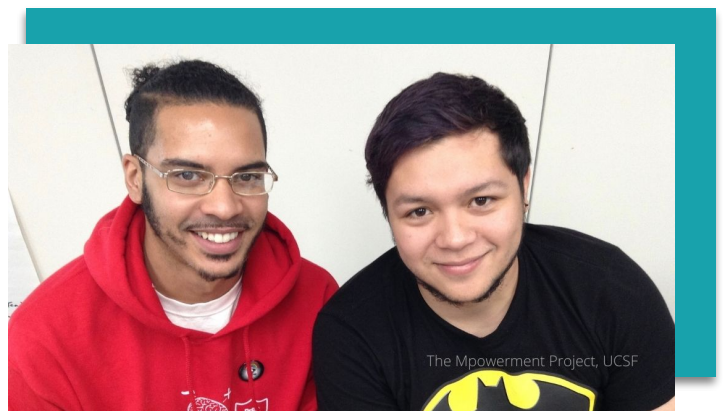


## International

### **Multilevel HIV Prevention Intervention with MSM in Peru**

**Investigators:** Susan Kegeles, Andre Maiorana, Carlos Caceres (Cayetano Heredia University, Perú)

This project seeks to implement and test a multi-level HIV prevention intervention (Proyecto Orgullo or Project Pride) for MSM and transgender women focusing on the full HIV Continuum of Prevention and Care. It focuses on community mobilization and empowerment around sexual risk reduction, HIV testing, helping gay men and transgender women living with HIV to engage in care, and working with the health system to increase focus on prevention with people living with HIV. This includes treatment as prevention and sensitization of the staff to work with gay men and transgender women. This “combination intervention” addresses individual, interpersonal, social and structural level issues.



# International Continued

## The ISHKonnect Study: Internet based HIV prevention for MSM in India

**Investigators:** Johnny Wilkerson (PI, UT Health Sciences Center Houston), Maria Ekstrand (CoPI), Simon Rosser (Co-PI, University of MN), Ashok Row Kavi (Co-I, Humsafar Trust, India), Shruta Rawat (Humsafar Trust, India), Pallav Patankar (Humsafar Trust, India), and Vivek Anand (CEO, Humsafar Trust, India)

The ISHKonnect study was the first study to examine sexual risk behaviors among MSM in Maharashtra, India, who were meeting male sex partners online. Following formative research, an online, cross-sectional survey was conducted among 449 MSM to determine the demographic characteristics, identities, attitudes, and sexual and substance use behaviors of this population and to develop recommendations for a future internet-based HIV-prevention intervention. Several articles have been published, including...

## Information, Motivation, and Self-Efficacy Among Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Women in the State of Maharashtra, India

**Investigators:** Wilkerson JM, Rhoton JM, Li D, Rawat SA, Patankar P, Rosser BRS, Ekstrand M

This publication concluded that condom-related knowledge is not associated with their use, which suggests that future condom

campaigns need to go beyond knowledge to increase motivation. While access to ART in India has improved greatly in the past few years, PrEP is not yet easily available, which makes a continued inclusion of condom use an essential part of future HIV prevention campaigns.

## Substance Use, Mental Health, HIV Testing, and Sexual Risk Behavior Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in the State of Maharashtra, India

**Investigators:** Wilkerson JM, Di Paola A, Rawat S, Patankar P, Rosser BRS, Ekstrand ML.

This publication reported high rates of depression (58%) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (56%). Participants engaging in hazardous drinking (23%) or illicit substance use (12%) were more likely to have had multiple sexual partners and experience IPV. Those reporting illicit substance use were also more likely to engage in condomless anal sex. Based on these findings, it would likely be helpful for public health interventions to integrate HIV, substance use, and mental health services.



# Couples

## Couples-focused intervention to improve engagement in HIV care: protocol for a randomized controlled trial

**Investigators:** Tabrisky AP, Coffin LS, Olem DP, Neilands TB, Johnson MO.

### DuoPACT: A couples-based approach to improving engagement in HIV care

**Investigators:** Mallory Johnson (PI); Monica Gandhi, Tor Neilands, Kimberly Koester, Kristi Gamarel

Social support, particularly in the context of primary romantic relationships, has consistently been documented as a predictor of health behaviors, including adherence to care for HIV and other conditions. As such, couples-based interventions have the potential to create a lasting effect on engagement in HIV care, uptake and adherence to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention, and other health behaviors among sexual and gender minority primary relationships. DuoPACT is a randomized controlled trial comparing virologic outcomes of HIV sero discordant and sero concordant positive, sexual and gender minority couples randomized to a couple-level intervention or to an individual intervention. Study accrual is complete with 144 couples (288 individuals), all intervention sessions have been administered and is in data collection follow-up phase.

To support analysis of DuoPACT's "relationship stigma" data, defined as the anticipated feelings of violence, discrimination, or rejection from family, friends, and others as a result of one's romantic relationship due to heteronormative and cis-normative models of relationships that pervade societies, qualitative interviews were completed with a subset of study participants. The interviews will help us to better understand the nuanced domains of relationship stigma and whether and how these different forms of stigma manifest in and impact participants' relationships.



## Couples Continued

### **The LetSync Project: Creating a mHealth Tool for Enhancing HIV Care Engagement in the Dyadic Context**

**Investigators:** Judy Tan (PI), Tor Neilands, Susan Kegeles, Parya Saberi, Emily Arnold

Black men who have sex with men are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS. The primary romantic relationship provides an important context for understanding HIV care engagement among MSM in a primary romantic relationship with another man. Relationship factors such as communication, relationship satisfaction, and social support have been shown to predict health outcomes, including those in the HIV Care Continuum.

Mobile health (mHealth) holds tremendous potential for facilitating relationship factors conducive to HIV care engagement among Black men who are in a primary romantic relationship with another man.

The goal of this project is to develop a couples-focused mHealth tool that enhances relationship factors important to HIV care engagement among HIV+ Black men who are in a primary romantic relationship with another man.

## PrEP

### **Texas PrEP Intervention Study**

**Investigators:** Susan Kegeles & Greg Rebchook (PIs), Robert Williams, Scott Tebbetts, Andres Maiorana

Texas has high rates of HIV infection despite the availability of PrEP. Young Black and Latino men who have sex with men (YBLMSM) are less likely than young white MSM to take PrEP, adhere to PrEP, and continue PrEP use over time. This study involves collaboration with two CBOs and an organization running two PrEP clinics. The three organizations will use Core Elements of the Mpowerment Project (MP), an evidence-based, community-level intervention to facilitate the empowerment of young MSM and reduce HIV risk. This project will assess the implementation strategies and outcomes of PrEP-enhanced activities.



# PrEP

## Continued

### **CRRUSH-Sacramento: Connecting Resources for Rural and Urban Sexual Health in Sacramento County**

**Investigators:** Kimberly Koester (PI), Orlando Harris, Chadwick Campbell, Shana Hughes, Janet Myers

The CRRUSH-Sacramento project is a collaboration between community members, service providers and researchers focused on adapting an evidence-based sexual health services intervention designed to increase PrEP uptake to fit the local HIV epidemic in Sacramento County, California one the hotspot counties identified in the United State's Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative.

During this two-year study we will identify how to best adapt the CRUSH project to better meet the needs of young gay and bisexual racial and ethnic minority men in Sacramento County. To do so, we are using a novel strategy called a discrete choice experiment – a survey method most commonly used in the marketing industry. A discrete choice experiment or DCE is designed to examine how people prioritize and make trade-offs across a set of hypothetical scenarios in this case of the design of a sexual health clinic. Our DCE we will allow us to identify the elements of a sexual health service program that are the most important to young gay and bisexual men e.g., location, cost, type of appointments, provider demographics. This

will allow us to strategically develop a sexual health clinic that matches the preferences of the community. In collaboration with our community partners, we plan to implement the most preferred characteristics of a sexual health delivery model and evaluate the extent to which the model optimizes the uptake of PrEP and routine STI screening and treatment among young gay and bisexual men in Sacramento County.



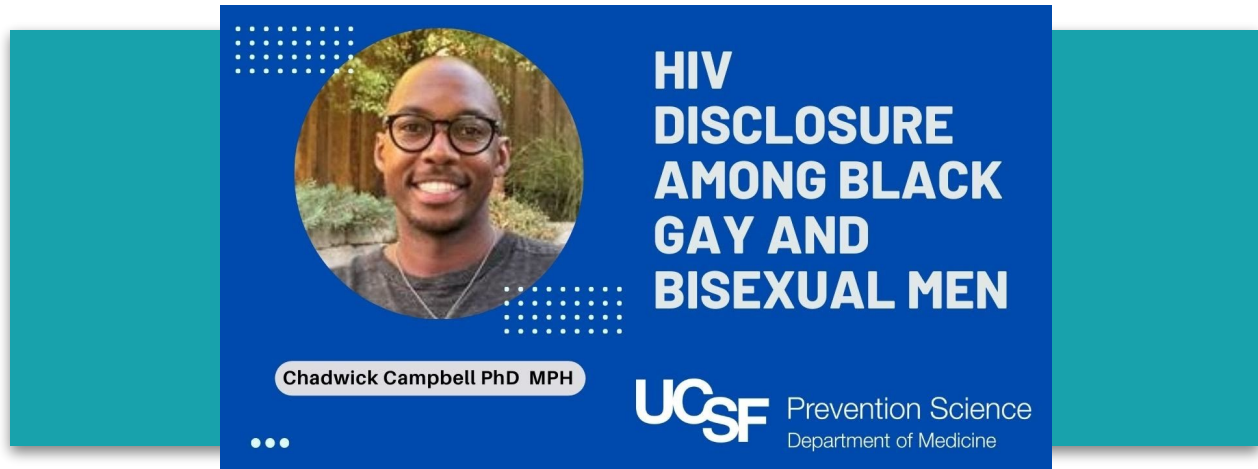
Photos: Michael Macor / The Chronicle



## Additional Resources

### [Resources and Guidance Related to HIV and COVID-19](#)

**VIDEO.** Mini-Lecture. Structural and Intersectional Biographical Disruption. HIV Disclosure Among Black Gay and Bisexual Men. In this six-minute video, Chadwick Campbell, Ph.D. discusses the effects of stigma and HIV disclosure among Black gay and bisexual men. (C Campbell CAPS/PRC). [View the full Town Hall presentation here.](#)



What are Black men's HIV prevention needs? (2020)

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/research-project/black-men-2>

What are transgender men's HIV prevention needs? (2015)

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/research-project/transgender-men>

List of available fact sheets in English and some in Spanish

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/resources/factsheets-english-and-spanish>

FREE. [Order a HIV Self-Test Kit in 3-minutes.](#) (United States).

UCSF Anti-Racism Initiative

<https://diversity.ucsf.edu/antiracism-initiative>



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