

Factors influencing AIDS risk perception of black gay men

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Objective. As AIDS continues to disproportionately affect Blacks in the U.S. (CDC, 1988; Mays & Cochran, 1987), accurate assessment of their perception of risk is needed to design effective risk reduction interventions. One HIV at-risk group for whom we have little empirical knowledge of their lifestyles (Cochran & Mays, 1988) are Black gay and bisexual men. The present study is a pretest effort to design an assessment instrument for a national study of HIV-related behavior.

Methods. Six focus groups, each composed of 8-10 Black gay and bisexual men, were convened in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Omaha, and Pittsburgh. Methodology based on marketing and group dynamics was used to determine subjects' AIDS knowledge level, perceptions of AIDS information credibility, and the influence of perceived discrimination on AIDS prevention services utilization.

Results. While knowledge of AIDS and its modes of transmission was high, distinctions regarding HIV, medical treatment and protective behaviors were more diffuse and less well understood. Utilization of AIDS preventive services within the White gay community were generally low.

Conclusion. Current methods of AIDS education, if they are to be effective, must be attentive to the role that ethnic minority status plays in illness prevention and health care utilization.

Mays, V.M., Cochran, S.D., & Bellinger, G. (1989 June 4-9). Factors influencing AIDS risk perception of Black gay men. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on AIDS (p. 802; abstract no. D.644), Montreal, Canada.