Program for Drug-Using Couples Lowers Hep C and Risky Sex Rates

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An intervention for couples who use drugs lowers their risk of contracting hepatitis C virus as well as raises their rate of condom use, aidsmap reports. Publishing their findings in the Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, researchers studied 300 drug-using couples in Kazakhstan between 2009 and 2012. The participants were randomized to either participate in a program designed to promote risk reduction in terms of sexual health and injection drug use, or to participate in a program for general wellness, which amounted to a control for the study.

At the outset, 26 percent of the participants were HIV positive, 77 percent had hep C, and 6 percent had a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Among those in the risk reduction group, the incidence of new hep C infections was 7.4 per 100 person-years, compared with 20 per 100 person-years in the control group. This translated to a 69 percent reduced hep C incidence in the risk reduction group when compared with the control arm.

The risk reduction group had a 51 percent reduced rate of HIV acquisition and a 37 percent reduced rate of new STI cases when compared with the control group. However, these differences were not statistically significant, meaning they could have occurred by chance.

Those in the risk reduction group had a 42 percent lower rate of condomless vaginal sex acts and were 2.3-times as likely to report using condoms consistently when compared with the control group. These changes occurred mostly during the first three months of follow-up, suggesting that additional efforts are needed to sustain and encourage such changes over time.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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