WiLLOW – Women Involved in Life Learning from Other Women

Best Evidence – Risk Reduction

INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

Intended Population
- Sexually-active, female clinic patients living with HIV

Goals of Intervention
- Reduce HIV transmission risk behaviors
- Reduce sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Enhance HIV-preventive psychosocial and structural factors

Brief Description

The *WiLLOW* intervention is a small group, skill-training intervention for women living with HIV. Through interactive discussions within groups of 8–10 women, the intervention emphasizes gender pride and informs women how to identify and maintain supportive people in their social networks. The intervention enhances awareness of HIV transmission risk behaviors, discredits myths regarding HIV prevention for people living with HIV, teaches communication skills for negotiating safer sex, and reinforces the benefits of consistent condom use. WiLLOW also teaches women how to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships, discusses the impact of abusive partners on safer sex, and provides information about local shelters for women in abusive relationships.

Theoretical Basis
- Social Cognitive Theory
- Theory of Gender and Power

Intervention Duration
- Four 4-hour sessions delivered over 4 consecutive weeks

Intervention Settings
- A community site set up to deliver the intervention and an HIV service clinic

Deliverer
- Trained female health educator and female peer educator living with HIV

Delivery Methods
- Demonstration
- Group discussion
- Lecture

INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

The intervention package and training are available through the Sociometrics under the name WILLOW: HIV Transmission Reduction Among Women Living with HIV.

EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

The original evaluation study was conducted in Anniston, Birmingham, and Montgomery, Alabama and in Atlanta, Georgia between 1997 and 2002.

Key Intervention Effects
- Reduced unprotected vaginal sex
- Reduced new STDs
- Increased condom use

Study Sample
The baseline study sample of 366 women living with HIV is characterized by the following:
- *84% Black or African American, 15% White, 1% other*
- *100% female*
- *Mean age of 35 years*
- *64% had a high school education*

Recruitment Settings
Clinics and health departments providing medical care to women living with HIV/AIDS

Eligibility Criteria
Women were eligible if they were between the ages of 18 and 50 years, sought medical care for HIV/AIDS at the study recruitment site, were sexually active in past 6 months, and provided written informed consent.

Assignment Method
Women were randomly assigned to either the WiLLOW intervention group (n = 190) or to a Health Promotion comparison group (n = 176).

Comparison Group
The Health Promotion comparison intervention consisted of four 4-hour interactive group sessions delivered over 4 weeks by a trained female health educator and a peer educator. This intervention addressed medication adherence, nutrition, and provider interaction skills.

Relevant Outcomes Measured and Follow-up Time
- Sexual risk behaviors during the previous 30 days (including number of unprotected vaginal sex acts and percentage of participants never using a condom) were measured at the 6- and 12-month follow-ups.
- Incident STDs, including chlamydia or gonorrhea, were measured at the 6- and 12-month follow-ups.

Participant Retention

- WiLLOW Intervention
  - 93% retained at 6 months
  - 85% retained at 12 months

- Health Promotion Comparison
  - 94% retained at 6 months
  - 90% retained at 12 months

Significant Findings

- At the 6- and 12-month follow-ups, women who received the WiLLOW intervention reported significantly fewer episodes of unprotected vaginal sex and were significantly less likely to report never using condoms than women in the Health Promotion comparison.
- Over the 12-month follow-up, women in the WiLLOW intervention were significantly less likely to acquire new bacterial STDs (chlamydia and gonorrhea) than women in the Health Promotion comparison.

Considerations

- None

REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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