Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Adolescent Preferences for a Pediatric Primary Care-based Sexually Transmitted Infection and HIV Prevention Intervention

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We sought to elicit perspectives on HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention among adolescents with recent STIs in primary care to optimize acceptability and effectiveness in designing a novel HIV/STI prevention intervention. We enrolled 13-19 year-olds with recent gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, and/or syphilis in a multimethods cross-sectional study at two primary care clinics. Participants completed surveys and interviews. We used an integrated analytic approach deductively coding data using the Integrated Behavioral Model, then inductively coding to identify themes not represented in the Integrated Behavioral Model. Participants (n = 35) were 85% cisgender female, 14% cisgender male, 1% transgender female; 25% identified as lesbian, bisexual, or queer. Most (97%) identified as non-Latinx Black. None used condoms consistently, 26% were aware of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and 31% were never HIV tested. Five key themes emerged. 1) Mental health was central to HIV prevention behavior uptake and coping with STI diagnosis. 2) Youth desired prevention counseling that allowed decisional autonomy and individualized goal setting. 3) Negative social norms around condoms and absent norms around HIV testing and PrEP limited method uptake. 4) Both confidence and concrete skills were needed to initiate prevention methods. 5) Youth desired education at the time of STI diagnosis to improve subsequent prevention decision making. Key intervention design considerations included 1) integrating mental health assessment and referral to services, 2) promoting individualized goal setting, 4) building communication skills, 4) providing navigation and material support for PrEP uptake and HIV testing, and 5) augmenting comprehensive STI and HIV prevention education.

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