Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Leveraging Mixed Methods to Promote HIV Prevention Services for Adolescents and Young Adults with Substance Use

Statement of Problem

Adolescents and young adults (AYA) who frequently use substances are more vulnerable to contracting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), especially if drugs are injected and/or used to enhance sexual experiences. Substance use during these experiences may result in condomless sex, more than one sexual partner, and trading sex for drugs, all of which are risk factors for contracting HIV. The co-occurring issues of substance use and high risk of HIV—which taken together can be defined as a syndemic—create challenges to adolescents and young adults' health and well-being.

Further research into this syndemic is vital to better understand the lived experience of adolescents and young adults and their unmet mental and sexual health needs to reduce the heightened risk of contracting HIV due to substance use.

Description

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a daily medication that helps reduce HIV infection and is an important HIV prevention tool.

Our team will conduct a mixed-methods study to learn more about facilitators and barriers to PrEP usage with the goal of optimizing HIV prevention services among adolescents and young adults.

To better understand adolescents and young adults and their lived experiences, we will utilize surveys and interviews of individuals ages 16-24 years who report substance use to learn more about their awareness of PrEP for HIV prevention, previous experiences using PrEP, and barriers to access and/or use. The surveys used in the study are designed to ask adolescents and young adults about their HIV risk behavior, awareness, knowledge, and attitudes related to HIV prevention services. A subset of survey participants will be selected to participate in an hour-long audio-recorded semi-structured freelist interview, a qualitative interview technique, to explore factors that youth identify as influencing HIV prevention.

Next Steps

Using the study results, we aim to contribute to the development of multi-level, patient-centered interventions to increase HIV prevention uptake among adolescents and young adults who report frequent and consistent substance use as well as to inform improvement of existing HIV prevention strategies.

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Related Tools & Publications

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Blog Post
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Article
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