

Poster presentation

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PI5-28. Attitudes and awareness of HIV vaccine research in HIV uninfected MSM in four US cities: Rochester, Boston, San Francisco and Philadelphia

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from AIDS Vaccine 2009
Paris, France. 19–22 October 2009

Published: 22 October 2009

Retrovirology 2009, **6**(Suppl 3):P229 doi:10.1186/1742-4690-6-S3-P229

This abstract is available from: <http://www.retrovirology.com/content/6/S3/P229>

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Background

The Step Study results generated volumes of press coverage. Complex results, with negative news of some vaccine recipients being at higher risk of infection than similar men who received placebo, might have created a negative environment within the community that would be recruited for future HIV vaccine studies. Focus groups in four cities were convened to assess the current attitudes and awareness of HIV vaccine research.

Methods

Seven groups were recruited through Craig's List and outreach through community-based organizations. Each of the 66 participants was self-reported as an HIV uninfected man who has sex with men and is between the age of 18 and 45. The same discussion guide was used for all seven groups; progressing through word association with "HIV" and "HIV vaccine," identifications of barriers and motivators to participation in clinical trials, and classification of the trustworthiness of sources of information on clinical trials.

Results

HIV vaccine was strongly associated with the word "HOPE." The top barrier to participation is a fear of being exposed to HIV from a belief that the vaccines contain the HIV virus or that they would be expected to have unprotected sex as part of the study. Other barriers were focused on study related issues, e.g., side effects, duration of study.

The motivators for participation were highly related to altruism or to an expected benefit to oneself. Personal health care providers, community-based organizations and local universities were trusted sources of information. Religious leaders were distrusted as sources of information on clinical trials. Governments and health insurers were neutral to distrusted.

Conclusion

Recruitment for HIV vaccine trials must overcome low public awareness of HIV vaccine research. Messages must appeal to the altruistic motivators to participation and address the barriers to participation that arise from lack of knowledge about modern vaccine development and clinical research.