

Poster presentation

P15-18. Behavioral and social science in HIV vaccine clinical research: workshop recommendations

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Background

In May 2009, a workshop was held in Washington, DC to identify how HIV vaccine and Behavioral and Social Science (BSS) researchers, along with relevant communities, could undertake a more collaborative and integrative approach to the area of HIV vaccine clinical research. The workshop sought to identify challenges and opportunities as well as break new ground operationally to advance such an approach.

Methods

During the 1.5 day workshop, presentations on key BSS topics, methodology and experiences were presented and discussed. A community panel shared their experiences and insights related to trial participation and community engagement. To formulate concrete recommendations for addressing specific BSS issues in upcoming HIV vaccine clinical research, participants divided into groups to discuss the following topics: social impact, risk assessment, community engagement, informed consent, risk reduction, and special populations.

Results

Seventy-one people from government and non-governmental organizations participated, including HIV vaccine researchers, clinical trialists, BSS researchers, community representatives, and funders. Presentations, roundtables, and a dedicated community panel each highlighted the importance of ensuring BSSR is an integral component of HIV vaccine clinical research throughout the research continuum. Issue-specific recommendations addressed the need for: improved accuracy of data; standardization of

data collection to enable comparisons across studies; community engagement at all levels; equipoise; evidenced-based counseling; dynamics of vulnerable, often marginalized, populations; as well as consideration of multiple complex influences. The importance of diffusing these recommendations with change agents needed to bring about this advance in research thinking and practice was emphasized.

Conclusion

Improved consideration of BSS issues within a more integrative research framework could improve the efficiency and relevance of HIV vaccine clinical research. Efforts to increase the integration and visibility of BSS aspects of this research must continue.