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NOTEWORTHY

Rutgers nurse premieres videos to reduce HIV risk



Scene from video to reduce HIV sexual-risk behavior.

Rachel Jones, RN, PhD, faculty member of Rutgers College of Nursing, recently premiered video vignettes for hand-held computers aimed at reducing young women's HIV sexual risk behavior. The videos are part of a study funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research and the National Library of Medicine of the National Institutes of Health, as well as a Rutgers Busch Biomedical Research grant. The study examines the effectiveness of computerized tailored video health promotion messages as an approach to reduce HIV-risk behavior.

The urban, soap-opera-type vignettes are based on information gathered and analyzed from focus groups with women in public housing developments and other locations in Newark and Jersey City, said Jones, assistant professor at Rutgers College of Nursing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heterosexual transmission accounts for 79 percent of HIV infection in women. Although African-American and Latina women together represent about 25 percent of all women in the United States, they account for 83 percent of AIDS diagnoses reported in 2003.

"HIV/AIDS among women is one of the most pressing public health problems in Newark, Jersey City and the surrounding communities," Jones said. "This is a preventable disease and we want to find out if these video vignettes, with their stories and characters, will change their views or attitudes about unprotected sex."

The stories were scripted and performed by students and graduates of The Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Rutgers-Newark. Other actors were selected from a large casting call. The HIV risk-reduction message, based on the science of HIV risk and women's wisdom shared in the focus groups, is communicated as each actor revisits high-risk scenes and, this time, acts to reduce HIV risk.

Pilot testing of the videos with women between 18 and 29 years of age, using hand-held computers, took place in Newark and Jersey City in May. In the final phase of the research, an interactive, computerized decision support system will be built to deliver the video vignettes as tailored feedback to women, who will take a computer-based interview on hand-held, tablet or desktop computers.

The feedback is tailored to the participant's pattern of risk behaviors, providing culturally relevant video vignettes that deliver health promotion messages to promote safer sexual practices. This research will test whether HIV sexual reduction messages, based on women's stories of risk,

relationships and acting with power, can promote behavior change. *RNL*

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