Risk Taking Behaviors of HIV-Positive Adults in Zimbabwe: Opportunities for Prevention

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BACKGROUND
Historically, HIV prevention efforts have not targeted HIV-positive individuals despite strong evidence that focusing on this population can reduce transmission of the virus. In Zimbabwe, where HIV prevalence is 13.7% and 80% of those with the virus do not know their HIV-positive status, there is a need to assess HIV risk behaviors among HIV-positive adults to inform prevention interventions with this population.

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RESULTS
• Only 1 of every 4 HIV-positive adults reported previously being tested for HIV. 88% of married individuals shared their HIV status with their partner.
• Overall, 80% of HIV-positive adults were sexually active in the past year.
• 42% of all HIV-positive adults reported 3 or more lifetime partners, and 17% reported having sex with a non-spousal partner in the past year.
• 83% of all last sexual acts with HIV-positive adults were unprotected, and among HIV-positive adults who had sex with a non-spousal partner, less than half (42%) used condoms.
• Only 14% of HIV-positive men use condoms consistently.
• 47% of all HIV-positive adults reported currently using a contraceptive method.
• HIV-positive adults who had tested for HIV were more likely to use contraceptives.

CONCLUSIONS
• Despite high levels of sexual activity among HIV-positive adults, both condom use and knowledge of HIV status remain low.
• HIV transmission risk is compounded by having multiple sexual partners.
• Because adults who were HIV positive were more likely to use contraception, integration of family planning (FP) and HIV messages may expand uptake of both FP and HIV services.
• These findings imply a need to promote the importance of condom use and the reduction of sexual partners, as well as a need to scale up provider-initiated HIV testing and counseling.

DESCRIPTION
We examined the characteristics and risk taking behaviors of HIV-positive individuals in Zimbabwe. The specific behaviors examined included: knowledge of HIV status; having multiple lifetime sexual partners; having sex with a non-spousal partner; condom use at both last sex and at last higher-risk sex; and pregnancy risk behavior.

METHODS
This study analyzed data collected from the 2005/06 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey which had a nationally representative sample of 8,907 women aged 15 to 49 and 7,175 men aged 15-54. Blood samples were collected from 70% of eligible adults. Of those tested, 21% of women and 15% of men were HIV positive.

• Analysis of data was limited to HIV-positive adults
• Logistic regression models, both descriptive and multivariate, were employed to examine risk factors associated with selected risk-taking behaviors of HIV-positive adults. These factors included: knowledge of HIV status; having multiple lifetime sexual partners; having sex with a non-spousal partner; condom use at last sex; and pregnancy risk behavior.
• STATA version 10 was used to conduct the analysis.

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