Introduction

• From 2012-2016, HIV diagnoses increased 25% among white persons who inject drugs (PWID) in rural America, while HIV diagnoses among other races and ethnicities declined.1

• Current HIV outbreak in Huntington West Virginia and surrounding Cabell County:2
  • 98% PWID
  • 42% women

• Emergence of HIV among PWID threatens HIV elimination efforts.3

• Few published studies have focused on rural women’s attitudes toward HIV prevention and harm reduction services.

Objective
To assess the rural women’s attitudes regarding HIV risk and prevention

Methods

• Mixed-methods, cross-sectional study
• Women (ages 18-44 years)
• Conducted in rural southern WV (Fayette and Kanawha Counties).

• Quantitative data was collected through use of Audio-assisted Computer Self-Interview (ACASI).
• Qualitative portion included a semi-structured interview comprised of open-ended questions, complemented by questions derived from existing literature relating to urban and international rural areas affected by drug addiction.

Results

Study Sample Demographics (N=88)

- >95%, White
- 30%, Income < $20,000
- 59%, 3 or more people living in household

Emergent Qualitative Study Themes (N=88)

- Isolation
- Intergenerational drug use
- Community stigma

Conclusions

• Most women in this study were not concerned about potential HIV acquisition.
• Effective education on HIV risk is greatly needed.
• Successful implementation of HIV prevention must address:
  • Isolation among rural women at-risk for HIV acquisition and
  • Community stigma of harm reduction services (Ex: syringe services and pre-exposure prophylaxis).

References

2 Mike Kilkenny, M.D., Executive Director, Cabell-Huntington Health Department, personal communication, November 4, 2019.

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