



FEATURE ARTICLE

Take Charge Project: An HIV/HCV and Substance Abuse Initiative for African-American Young Adults in Metro Atlanta

By: Clarissa Francis, MA, Ronald Braithwaite, PhD, Rhonda Conerly Holliday, PhD, Tiffany Zellner, MPH, and Jean Bonhomme, MD
Morehouse School of Medicine

ABSTRACT

Take Charge is a project that provides sexual health education, substance abuse risk reduction, HIV, and Hepatitis C testing and linkage to care for communities and college campuses in Atlanta, Georgia. This project prioritizes the development and implementation of strategies which prevent and reduce substance abuse and the transmission of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C among African American young adults ages 18-24. Research has shown that strategies to reach this high-risk population are desperately needed. Therefore, this project aims to combat challenges to prevention among this population such as lack of awareness of HIV and Hepatitis C status, access and availability of condoms among those who are sexually active, lack of knowledge on transmission routes of HIV, Hepatitis C and the role that substance use plays on decision making. To date, the Take charge project has tested 1,489 individuals for HIV and Hepatitis C. The majority of individuals reported that they were African American (93%), between 18-24 years old (90%), single (91%), and identified as heterosexual (74%). Most participants (91%) had not previously had a Hepatitis C test, while 39% had never been previously tested for HIV. The most common sexual risk behaviors reported were having sex with multiple partners (48%), having unprotected sex (65%), and having sex with someone with an unknown HIV status (40%). The most commonly reported substances used were alcohol (59%) and marijuana (47%). Based on these results, we are encouraged to continue our work, including, testing initiatives, educational workshops, and condom distribution to our population to raise awareness and increase prevention and risk reduction strategies. At the conclusion of our project we will perform a comparative data-analysis in order to evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies used and to generate new approaches to HIV, Substance Abuse, and Hepatitis C prevention.

Keywords: Hepatitis C; HIV/AIDS; Testing; Condoms; Substance Abuse; HBCUs

Suggested Citation:

Francis, C., Braithwaite, R., Holliday Conerly, R., Zellner, T. & Bonhomme, J. "Take Charge Project: An HIV/HCV and Substance Abuse Initiative for African-American Young Adults in Metro Atlanta", *International Journal of Ethnic College Health*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 21-28.

The *International Journal of Ethnic College Health* is a peer-reviewed electronic journal and repository of excellence in health promotion and disease prevention at Minority-Serving Institutions worldwide published by the Institute for Successful Leadership, Inc. Full articles are available solely for subscribers to the publication at www.THEISL4Uonline.com, and distribution/reprinting without consent of the Institute of Successful Leadership, Inc. is prohibited.