

STAYING SAFE: Training People Who Inject Drugs to Avoid HCV and HIV Infection

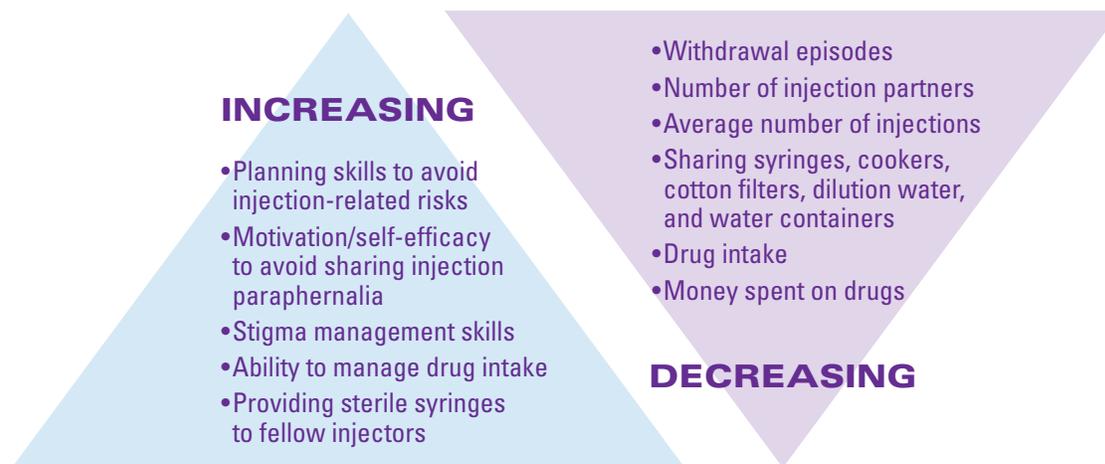
Purpose of this study

This study tested the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary efficacy of the “Staying Safe” Intervention. The Staying Safe approach was informed by persons who injected drugs (PWID) over a long period, but remained free of HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. The intervention trains PWID to similarly avoid infections by addressing events, cues and situations that occur prior to the moment of injection. Staying Safe emphasizes how attaining certain goals not directly focused on disease prevention (e.g., managing drug intake, reducing injection network size, preventing stigma) can have a “symbiotic effect” on disease prevention by reducing transmission risk. Although harm reduction strategies — such as syringe exchange programs and opioid substitution therapy — have reduced the transmission of HIV, these strategies have failed to show conclusive evidence that they reduce HCV prevalence among PWID (estimated to be about 75%).

How was the study conducted and who was involved?

The study recruited 68 participants from New York City who were current, experienced injectors. Participants completed a baseline questionnaire before attending five, 2-hour, small group “Staying Safe” intervention sessions that trained them in this approach to disease prevention. Almost 80% of participants completed 3 or more of the intervention sessions. A post-intervention questionnaire, given three months later, was completed by 75% of participants.

What were some of the findings of the study? The Staying Safe Intervention led to:



What might this mean for organizations working with PWID and harm reduction?

- The Staying Safe Intervention has great potential to support PWID in reducing infectious disease risk, and future research can build upon these findings.
- With their new skills and awareness of safer injection practices, individuals who participate in the intervention may be effective transmitters of harm reduction activities and strategies in their injection networks

Where can you find more information about these findings?

Mateu-Gelabert P, Gwadz MV, Guarino H, Sandoval M, Cleland CM, Jordan A, Hagan H, Lune H, & Friedman SR (2014) The Staying Safe Intervention: Training people who inject drugs in strategies to avoid injection-related HCV and HIV infection. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 26, 144-57.

Or contact Pedro Mateu-Gelabert at mateu-gelabert@ndri.org

Supported by grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (R21DA026328, R01DA019383, R01DA031597, and R01DA035146).