

Computerized Counseling Improves Care for Persons Living with HIV

Purpose of this study

This randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluated the Computer Assessment & Rx Education for HIV-positive people (CARE+), an intervention for improving antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence and reducing HIV transmission by people living with HIV. CARE+ is a computerized counseling intervention delivered on touchscreen tablets. At the beginning of the intervention, the participant selects an avatar, who serves as a “guide” through all the components of CARE+. The intervention includes an audio-narrated assessment, tailored feedback, skill-building videos, health plan, and printout with referrals.

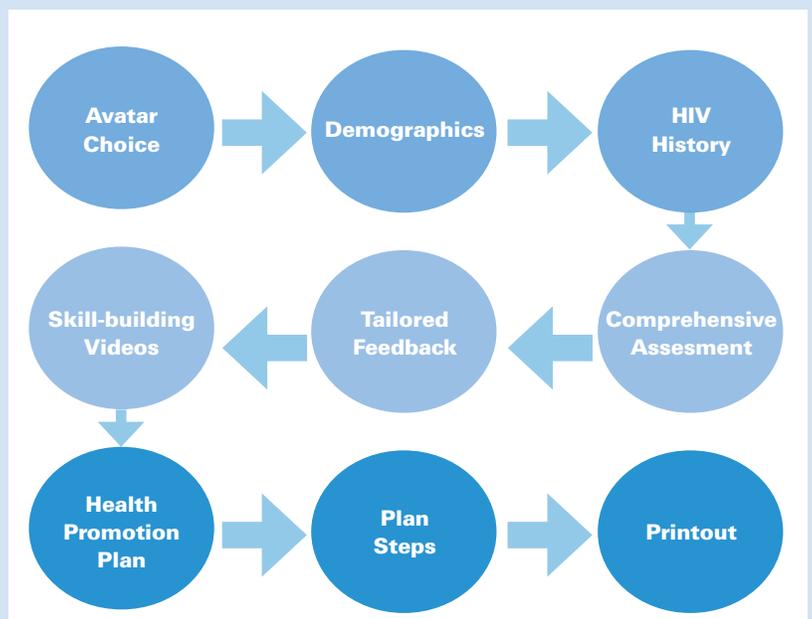
How was the study conducted and who was involved?

The study recruited 240 participants in Seattle, WA from a university-affiliated HIV clinic and a community-based HIV service organization. Participants were randomly divided into two groups: (1) an intervention group receiving the Care+ intervention, and (2) a control group receiving a computerized behavior assessment and standard care only. Participants from both groups had 4 sessions over a 9-month period.

What were the key findings of the study?

- At 9-month follow-up, those in the CARE+ intervention group, compared to those in the control group:
 - had reduced viral load (VL) and reported an increased percentage of ART medication doses taken (among those with detectable VL at baseline)
 - reported a decrease in sexual transmission behaviors
- The CARE+ intervention was equally effective in both health care settings.
- The CARE+ intervention was well received, with participants finding it easy to use, the right length, and providing enough privacy. They judged it to be as much or more helpful than face-to-face counseling from a staff member.

Components of the CARE+ Intervention



What might this mean for organizations and institutions concerned with ART medication adherence and HIV sexual transmission?

Computer-delivered counseling can be effective in promoting increased medication adherence and decreased sexual transmission behaviors in persons with HIV, freeing staff to concentrate on other issues requiring staff-client interactions.

Where can you find more information about this study?

Kurth AE, Spielberg F, Cleland CM, Lambdin B, Bangsberg DR, Frick PA, Severynyn AO, Clausen M, Norman RG, Lockhart D, Simoni JM, & Holmes KK (2013) Computerized counseling reduces HIV-1 viral load and sexual transmission risk: Findings from a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, E-pub Dec 2013; 2014;65:611–620.

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For more information about the CARE+ tool, including a demo, see ronline.com/projects/care.aspx or contact Jim Larkin at jim@ronline.com

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