

The Partner Study: Sexual Risks

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Abstract

The Partner Study is a five-year, NIH-Funded research project focused on the potential sexual transmission of HIV from those with the disease to their partners without the disease and on to other sex partners. The project interviewed 114 people with HIV (HIV+), 114 of their sex partners without HIV (HIV-), and also 146 HIV- persons without an HIV+ partner.

The project focuses on the reasons why people protect themselves and others. It thus examines such factors as knowledge of HIV, concern about getting or giving the disease, the impact of social norms, partners' disclosure of HIV status, and ability to communicate with one's sex partner(s).

The findings to be presented include:

- A test of the AIDS Risk Reduction Model that is designed to identify the critical factors that determine the activation of a person's self protection motivation.
- An examination of the relevance of social norms to HIV-protection behaviors. Though social scientists have relied on social norms as explanations for behavior since Durkheim, in these findings (1) social norms appear to have a modest effect on behavior even in areas where norms of protection had been thought to be strong and (2) enforcement of social norms is unrelated to eventual behavior.
- An examination of multiple reasons people give for using or not using condoms and what those reasons say about their motivations and actual condom use.
- An examination of how privacy rules regulate the disclosure of information about HIV to sex partners. Using the Communication Privacy Management perspective (Petronio, 2002), this study examines the privacy boundary surrounding information about HIV status by both the HIV+ partner and the HIV- partner.