

## Barriers and Facilitators to Salivary Rapid HIV Testing in African Americans

**OBJECTIVE:** To identify barriers and facilitators of voluntary Salivary Rapid HIV testing decisions (SRT) among African Americans in order to develop interventions to improve HIV testing rates and care entry if HIV positive.

**METHODS:** This first phase of a two-phase study used a Comprehensive Health Seeking and Coping Paradigm-based semi-structured interview guide (SSIG) to conduct 10 focus groups of 2-5 African Americans recruited from a large STI Clinic. Content analysis of the focus group transcripts was done using line-by-line analysis, and reviewing sentences and phrases for patterns or core meanings. Patterns were refined and synthesized into descriptive statements. An iterative process of comparison was used to further analyze the data, moving between individual elements of the text specific to participant responses. Meanings that were implicit rather than explicit in the text; and of one whole account with another were used to identify overall patterns of meaning.

**RESULTS:** Of the 38 African American adults recruited, 16 were female with ages 18-49 (M =23) and 22 were male with ages 18-49 (M=29.5). All self identified as heterosexual with most reporting low income and no health insurance. Within the context of barriers and facilitators to SRT, eight themes emerged: Familiarity, Stigma, Fear, Access, Immediacy, Ease, Degree of Responsibility, and Trust. Each theme was not seen exclusively as a barrier or facilitator but was interpreted to be one or the other depending on the aspect of HIV testing being discussed. A gender sub analysis revealed themes of health maintenance and illness management for females and males respectively.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Since there has not been an increase in HIV testing rates in AA's even with newer SRT technology. The findings support the need to assess barriers and facilitators to testing decisions in order to increase testing rates. The themes also suggest the need for tailored community based interventions that decrease fear, stigma and increase trust in testing methods and providers for HIV and STI screening.