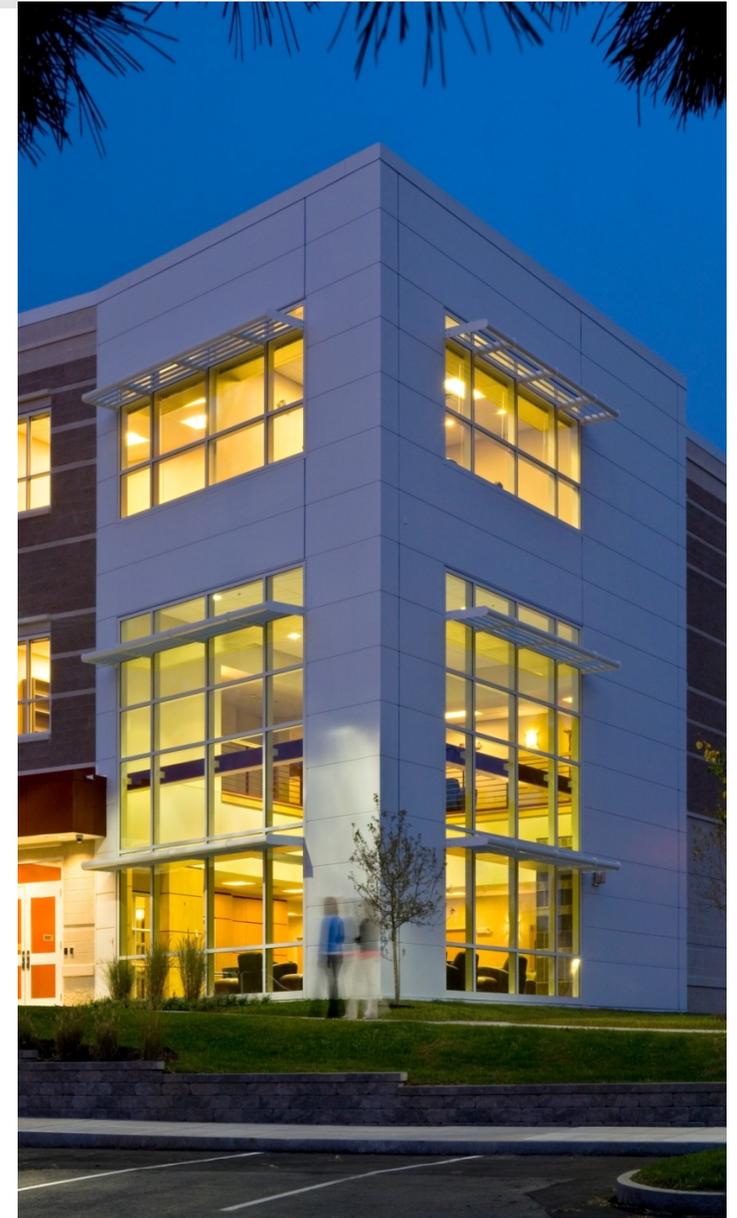


Women, Intimate Partner Violence, and HIV Prevention Trials

Sean Philpott, PhD, MSBioethics

The Bioethics Program

Union Graduate College-Mt. Sinai
School of Medicine



Intimate Partner Violence

Percent of women reporting intimate partner violence:

	Ever	Last 12 months
Bangladesh province	61.7	31.9
Brazil province	36.9	14.8
Ethiopia province	70.9	53.7
Namibia city	35.9	19.5
Peru province	69.0	34.2
Samoa	46.1	22.4
Thailand province	47.4	22.9
Tanzania province	55.9	29.1

Source: WHO Multi-Country Study on Domestic Violence and Women's Health

Lack of Sexual Autonomy

Percent of women who believe that a wife can refuse sex if ...

	She doesn't want it	Her husband mistreats her
Bangladesh province	54.4	44.6
Brazil province	23.9	7.7
Ethiopia province	53.8	43.7
Namibia capital	17.9	12.3
Peru province	51.4	27.8
Samoa	72.0	31.2
Thailand province	23.8	11.6
Tanzania province	74.3	51.4

**Source: WHO Multi-Country Study on Domestic
Violence and Women's Health**

Women, Violence and HIV

- Violent relationships put women at increased risk of HIV and other STIs through a variety of biological, economic and cultural factors:
 - Forced sex can cause bleeding and tearing of the genital lining;
 - Women in these relationships lack the power to negotiate condom use or leave partners who put them at risk;
 - Other factors.

Female-Initiated Prevention Tools

- Female-initiated prevention tools could be used by women who cannot negotiate condom use or leave partners who put them at risk.
- Experimental female-initiated prevention tools being developed include:
 - Microbicides;
 - Cervical barriers;
 - Pre-exposure prophylaxis; and
 - Vaccines (?).

Microbicides and Covert Use

- Microbicides – vaginal gels, creams or films designed to block HIV – could offer women in violent relationships means of protection against HIV.
- Women in these relationships usually cannot negotiate condom use.
- They might, however, be able to use a user-initiated HIV prevention tool like a microbicide without their partner's knowledge.

Acceptability and Use of Microbicides

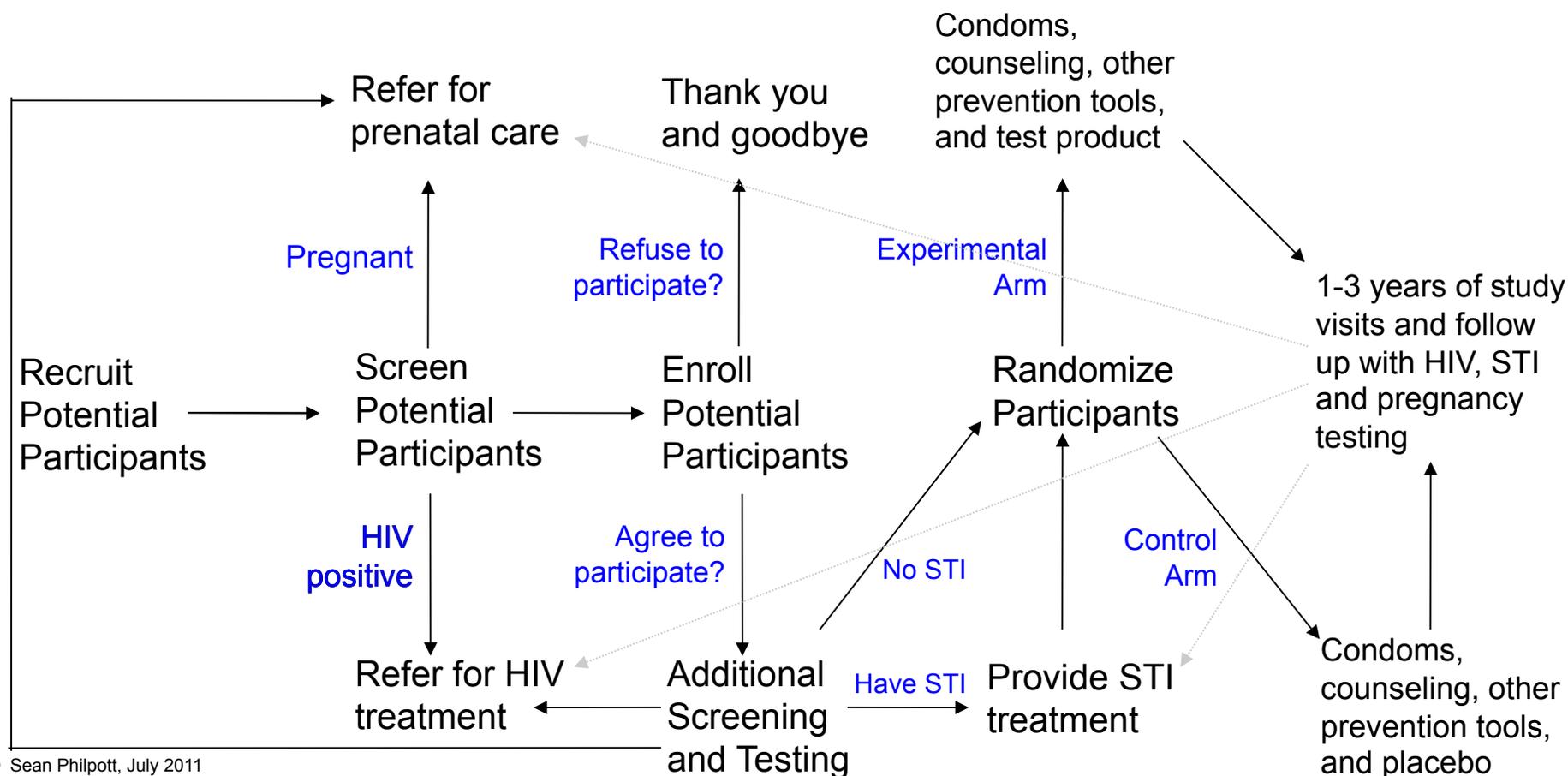
- New research suggests that most women can, would or should tell their partners.
 - “Passive acquiescence” versus “active involvement.”
 - Difficult to use consistently if covert.
 - Difficult to hide covert use, with discovery also putting women at risk.

HIV Prevention Trials

- Female-initiated HIV prevention tools like microbicides thus offer both promise and peril for women in violent relationships.
- All HIV prevention trials pose some risk of violence for women.
 - Risks of disclosed participation;
 - Risks associated with exclusion; and
 - Risks associated with counseling and other services provided in the trial.

HIV Prevention Trials (2)

Basic design of a phase IIb/III HIV prevention trial (500 – 10,000+ participants):



HIV Prevention Trials (3)

- Because of the risk of violence for some participants, HIV prevention researchers face a number of logistical and ethical challenges:
 - Ensuring confidentiality;
 - Minimizing risks to “screen outs”;
 - Minimizing risks to seroconverters;
 - Determining the level of support services to offer all participants; and
 - Responding to acts of violence associated with trial participation.

WHO Guidance

- WHO Ethics and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women:
 - Actions must be taken to reduced the risks to women participating in research, particularly the risk of violent reprisal;
 - Efforts should be made to reduce the risk of psychological distress and to provide some form of crisis intervention if needed; and
 - Referrals to social support services be provided.

Empirical Research

- You want to look at the effectiveness of intimate partner violence-focused interventions for women enrolled in a microbicide trial.
- How might you ethically gather empirical data to:
 - Determine whether psychological distress among women reporting a history of intimate partner violence is a research-related harm?

Empirical Research

- You want to look at the effectiveness of intimate partner violence-focused interventions for women enrolled in a microbicide trial.
- How might you ethically gather empirical data to:
 - Determine whether psychological distress among women reporting a history of intimate partner violence is a research-related harm?
 - Identify and reduce barriers to access for social support services?

Empirical Research (2)

- You are doing an HIV prevention study in a traditional and patriarchal resource-poor region where obtaining community consent is required.
- Based on your experiences, you are concerned about voluntary consent, particularly of women with a history of intimate-partner violence.
- How might you ethically gather empirical data that explores issues of voluntariness among women enrolled in this study?