EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY & STRESS REDUCTION NEEDS AMONG ADULTS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What are the spiritual and/or religious practices before and after diagnosis among persons living with HIV/AIDS?

• What intervention components would be useful to reduce stress?

• Would persons living with HIV/AIDS participate in a spiritual-based intervention to reduce stress?
METHODS

• Summer 2003

• Conducted qualitative study: focus groups

• 5 AIDS Service Organizations participated
  - Adults living with HIV/AIDS
  - Rural & urban Alabama counties

• Responses were recorded

• Monetary incentives distributed
DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS

- 31 participants
- Age ranges: 31 – 54 years
- 74% African American
- 39% women
- 26% married
- 55% > 12 years of education
- 23% employed
- Average years of diagnosis: 9.5 years
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE RESULTS

• Before HIV/AIDS Diagnosis: Religious
  – Most attended church regularly
  – Most reported routine religious practices

• After HIV/AIDS Diagnosis: Spiritual
  – Some continued attending church
  – Almost all reported having a strong, deeper relationship “with a higher power”
  – Most had not disclosed HIV status to spiritual leaders for fear of discrimination
STRESS INTERVENTION RESULTS

• Suggested Components
  1. Prayer
  2. Support Groups
  3. Peer helpers
  4. Self-actualization activities
  5. Personal Touch Programs
     • Hugs
     • Massage Therapy
SUMMARY

• Participant practices shifted from routine religious behaviors to strong spiritual beliefs after being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

• Participants were comfortable discussing spiritual behaviors in community versus religious settings.

• A spiritual-based program would be of interest and useful in reducing stress.
  - Prayer was #1 suggestion for stress reduction.
CONCLUSIONS

• Our study demonstrated that adults living with HIV/AIDS...
  - Believed spirituality is important
  - Had a strong spiritual foundation
  - Needed stress reduction techniques
  - Wanted low or no cost stress reduction methods
  - Confirmed that spiritual interventions are feasible