

Measuring HAART Optimism

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Outline

- Defining HAART Optimism
- Progression and types of scales
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Future Directions



HAART Optimism

- HAART Optimism: “The belief and/or reliance on new HIV treatments resulting in a decrease of fear around acquiring/transmitting HIV that lowers ones perception of their personal risk”
- With new treatments concern that the “fear of AIDS” as a check on gay men's behavior would disappear
- Growing concern that replacement by optimism in light of new therapies would lead to complacency around safer sex practices and may trigger risky behavior
- HAART Optimism is a form of risk compensation



Dimensions of HAART Optimism

- Researchers have distinguished among MSM that there are nuanced dimensions to HAART Optimism
- Two thoughts are playing out which some name HAART optimism and HAART realism
- Past differences in questions asked to HIV-negative men and HIV-positive men
- Effective scales measure attitudes not knowledge

- HAART Optimism: “The new treatments are so effective that I can be lax on safer sex practices”
- HAART Realism: “The severity of the illness is no longer a death sentence and therefore I have less to worry about”



Why is this useful?

- Glimpse in to new motivations around risky behavior
- Understanding the effect that innovations in treatment have on personal risk behavior
- Scales allow us to measure these thoughts



Dilley et al. 1997

- One of the earliest scales
- 54 men recruited into an intervention counseling study
- Inclusion criteria was self reported UAI and not having previously tested for HIV antibodies
- Tended to be low on optimism

Scale questions:

1. I am much less concerned about becoming HIV-positive myself.
2. I am more willing to take a chance of getting infected when having sex.
3. I have already taken a chance of getting infected when I had sex.
4. I am less likely to get infected from a guy who is on these new treatments than from a guy who is not on them



Crawford et al. 2003

- Conducted in 4 locations(Vancouver, London, Paris, Sydney/Melbourne) from Jan-Dec 2000
 - 4 point scale developed from an earlier larger Australian version
 - Validated and used in the four locations
 - Posed 3 questions they sought to investigate
1. To what extent are gay men optimistic in the light of these new HIV drug therapies?
 2. Does the level of optimism among gay men vary between communities?
 3. What is the association between HIV optimism and sexual risk behavior?





Scale questions:

1. New HIV treatments will take the worry out of sex.
 2. If every HIV-positive person took the new treatments, the AIDS epidemic would be over.
 3. People with an undetectable viral load don't need to worry so much about infecting others with HIV.
 4. HIV/AIDS is less serious than it used to be because of new treatments.
- Answers were scored 1 strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree
 - For this overall scores were low indicating low optimism
 - Answered questions: Relatively low in optimism, no community patterns, only risk association is optimistic people reported UAI in P6M



Brennan et al. 2009

- Newer work has looked at limitations of previous scales and sought to improve them
- Gay and Bisexual men interviewed in a 2-day health seminar
- Eligibility criteria included being an HIV-positive male, at least 18yrs or age, and self reported UAI in the last year
- 19 items divided into 3 scales: Susceptibility (10), Condom Motivation (5), and Severity (4)
- At this point there had been no questions for HIV+ men
- Addressed other limitations in previous scales and data (Men of Colour, directions of questions, etc.)



Factor 1: Susceptibility

People on combination drug therapy (HAART) are less likely to pass HIV on to an HIV-negative sexual partner through unprotected receptive anal sex (having an HIV-negative sexual partner fuck them without a condom).

HIV combination drug therapy (HAART) has made it less important for me to use condoms for insertive anal sex (fucking).

People on combination drug therapy (HAART) are less likely to pass HIV on to an HIV-negative sexual partner through unprotected oral sex.

HIV combination drug therapy (HAART) has made it less important for me to use condoms for receptive anal sex (getting fucked).

People on combination drug therapy (HAART) are less likely to pass HIV on to an HIV-negative sexual partner through unprotected insertive anal sex (fucking an HIV-negative partner without a condom).

Because we now have effective treatment for HIV, using condoms every time I have receptive anal sex (being fucked) is less important to me.

Because we now have effective treatment for HIV, using condoms every time I have insertive anal sex (fucking) is less important to me.

People who are on combination drug therapy (HAART) need to be less concerned about sexually transmitted diseases (such as gonorrhea, or syphilis) than those who are not on combination drug therapy.

A person with a viral load that is “undetectable” means that someone with HIV is less likely to transmit HIV to an HIV-negative sexual partner.

Having treatments for HIV (like HAART) means that AIDS is very nearly cured.

Factor 2: Condom motivation

Since we have effective treatment for HIV, I feel more motivated to use condoms with secondary partners each time I have receptive anal sex (getting fucked).

Since we have effective treatment for HIV, I feel more motivated to use condoms with my primary partner each time I have insertive anal sex (fucking).

Since we have effective treatment for HIV, I feel more motivated to use condoms with secondary partners each time I have insertive anal sex (fucking).

Always using condoms for anal sex is good for an HIV-positive person’s health even while on effective therapy.

Since we have effective treatment for HIV, I feel more motivated to use condoms with my primary partner each time I have receptive anal sex (getting fucked).

Factor 3: Severity


Since being on combination drug therapy (HAART) I feel physically healthier.

My life is much better now that I am on combination drug therapy (HAART).

Since being on combination drug therapy (HAART), I enjoy sex more.

HIV effective therapy has made the lives of people living with HIV who take the drugs better.



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- People on combination therapy (HAART) are less likely to pass HIV on to an HIV-negative sexual partner through unprotected insertive anal sex (fucking an HIV-negative sexual partner without a condom)
 - Having treatments for HIV (like HAART) mean that AIDS is very nearly cured
 - Always using condoms for anal sex is good for HIV-positive persons health even while on effective therapy.
 - Since being on combination therapy (HAART) I feel physically healthier
 - HIV effective therapy has made the lives of people living with HIV who takes drugs better.



Limitations

- Confusion in what scales were measuring
- Personal narratives
- Complex reasons for participation in risk behaviors
- Expected patterns not met



Future Directions

- There is no universal relationship between risk factors and optimism
- Differing sexual cultures and new innovations will lead to development of new scales
- Dynamic process that is only one part of health intervention

