



# WOMEN'S HEALTH CO-OP NEWSLETTER

## PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY 2006



### Working in the Community, Supporting Women Where They Are

Our research mission is to help substance abusers in diverse communities in South Africa and the United States reduce drug use and other high-risk behaviors. Our goal is to assess drug abuse; treatment need; risks associated with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; and physical, mental, and health problems. We also help women empower themselves to maintain healthier lives through skill building and referrals.

### WHAT'S NEW? FROM DR. WENDEE WECHSBERG

I hope this newsletter finds you doing well. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of the Women's Health CoOp. I greatly appreciate your support over the past year, and look forward to working with you in 2006. If you are not already involved in our Community Advisory Board, I urge you to join and help us develop ways to learn from and support our community.

After a year and a half of data collection, we are beginning to identify some important trends. For example, we found that outreach to active substance abusers in hard-to-reach areas in South Africa is possible, and that brief interventions can reduce substance use and promote HIV risk reduction. However, these preliminary findings should be interpreted cautiously, as we have not yet reached full sample size. In this newsletter we provide updates on our recent research activities and findings. Again, thank you for your support.

Best wishes,  
*Wendee Wechsberg*

### SUMMARY

The overall objective of the Women's Health CoOp study is to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between alcohol and other drug use, violence against sex workers, and HIV risk behaviors. The study is also examining whether a woman-focused intervention can help women reduce risks associated with HIV while addressing personal goals that could affect their ability to change the course of their lives.

### UPDATE FROM THE FIELD

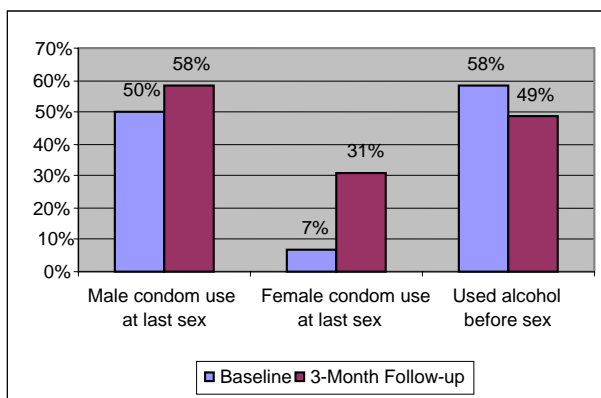
As of mid-January 2006, the following study milestones have been achieved:

- 304 women enrolled in the study
- 83% returned for the 3-month follow-up
- 85% returned for the 6-month follow-up

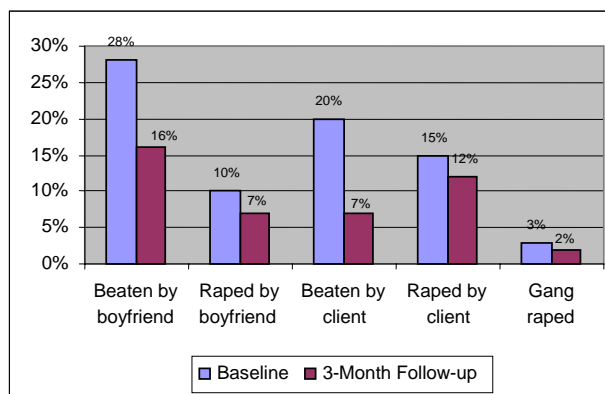
### PRELIMINARY DATA UPDATE: FINDINGS AT 3-MONTH FOLLOW-UP

Results from the 3-month follow-up showed positive changes in the participants sexual risk behaviors and violent victimization.

#### Boyfriend/Main Partner Risks



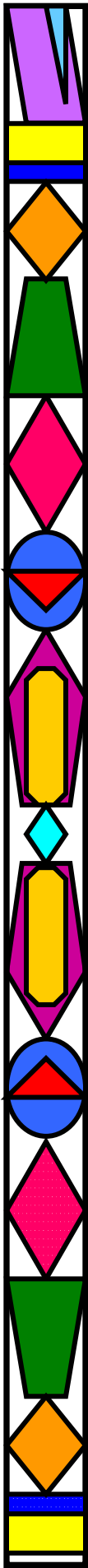
#### Violent Victimization



- The proportion of sex acts in which a male condom was used increased significantly.
- The proportion of sex acts in which a female condom was used increased significantly.
- The proportion of participants who reported violent victimization decreased.

### TUBERCULOSIS (TB) & HIV

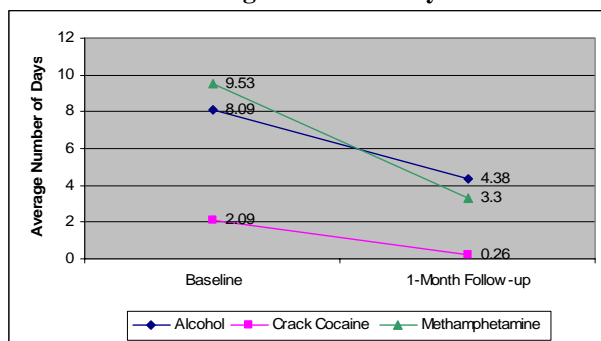
TB is a bacterial infection of the lungs. It is spread from person to person through the air. Germs go into the air when someone who has TB coughs, spits, or sneezes and other people can breathe in these germs. People with HIV have a weakened immune system and can get TB more easily and more often than other people. TB can be treated and cured whether you are HIV+ or not. The same pills work to cure TB even if you are HIV+. Once a person is being treated they are no longer able to spread TB. Look for the signs of TB (see reverse) and go to the clinic immediately if you have any of them. TB treatment is free at government clinics and hospitals.



## OTHER STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA CAPE TOWN WOMEN'S HEALTH COOP

The purpose of the NIDA sponsored Cape Town Women's Health CoOp (CT – WHC) pilot study was to adapt the woman-focused HIV prevention intervention for Black and Coloured high-risk drug-using women in Cape Town. The study also examined whether the original one-hour intervention session is best abbreviated as a two-session individual intervention or a two-session group intervention. Of the 113 women who completed a baseline assessment, 112 (99%) returned for their 1-month follow-up assessment. Results from follow-up revealed positive changes in the participants' sexual risk behaviors and substance use.

### Number of Days of Alcohol and Other Drug Use During the Past 30 Days



## NEW CAPE TOWN METHAMPHETAMINE SUPPLEMENT STUDY

The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) reported a countrywide increase in methamphetamine (aka "tik") use in 2004. The problem is particularly acute in Cape Town. Preliminary data from CT – WHC support these findings and suggest that methamphetamine use may be a primary illicit substance of abuse in some subpopulations. SACENDU findings also indicate that the problem of methamphetamine use is particularly serious among Cape Town's youths. This new NIDA study will examine how pervasive methamphetamine use is in poor township communities, particularly among younger females of childbearing age at-risk for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. This research is a necessary step prior to adapting an effective prevention intervention for these at-risk young females.

### SIGNS OF TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

- Coughing for more than 2 weeks
- Coughing up blood
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Sweating at night
- Feeling tired and weak
- Pain in the chest
- Shortness of breath
- Lumps or swelling
- A fever that comes and goes

## WOMEN'S HEALTH COOP FIELD STAFF

Siphiwe Buthelezi, Field Supervisor  
Winnie Gumula, Research Associate  
Mmapaseka Mogale, Research Associate  
Moirra Masipa, Field Outreach Worker  
Joel Kekana, Field Outreach Worker

### How to reach us:

Adverto House  
80 Celliers Street  
Office 402, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sunnyside, Pretoria  
Telephone: (012) 341-5000

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For information on our other projects, please contact:

Dr. Wendee Wechsberg  
Principal Investigator/Project Director  
Tel: +1-919-541-6422  
E-mail: [wmw@rti.org](mailto:wmw@rti.org)

Ms. Winnie Luseno  
Project Coordinator  
Tel: +1-919-316-3818  
E-mail: [wluseno@rti.org](mailto:wluseno@rti.org)

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) is made up of representatives from the community, NGOs, government, and professionals from the Gauteng Province. CAB members provide input and support to make our work more effective. If you are interested in being a CAB member, please call Viloshnee Reddy at (012) 342-5318 or E-mail [vreddy@rti.org.za](mailto:vreddy@rti.org.za)

## THANK YOU, RE A LEBOGA, SIYABONGA, ENKOJI, DANKIE

We would like to thank all the study participants, CAB members, and organizations that agreed to provide services for their continued support to make this project a successful collaboration. We look forward to building our scientific research base in South Africa and contributing to the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

### Items Needed

These women need clothing, shoes, books, underwear, socks, toys, and children's clothes, among other things. Please feel free to drop off donations at the Sunnyside site.

The Women's Health CoOp Project in Sunnyside is funded under grant number 1 RO1 AA14488-01 from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The Cape Town Women's Health CoOp is funded under grant number RO1 DA11609-07S2 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).