



Be Smart with Body Art: Lack of Knowledge Poses Risk for HCV Among College Students

Heather Diaz, DrPH, MPH, Marlene vonFriederichs-Fitzwater, PhD, MS, MPH, Dawn Nozika-Ferris, MHSE, CHES

Sacramento State University, Department of Kinesiology and Health Science

University of California, Davis Cancer Center



Background

- Hepatitis C virus (HCV): most common chronic viral infection in U.S.
- More than 5 million people infected in U.S.
- HCV: silent epidemic – 60-70% have no symptoms; 75-80% develop chronic HCV, at risk for chronic liver disease, cirrhosis and liver cancer
- Poor prevention efforts with college students
- Tattooing, body piercing and sharing body jewelry increases risk for Hep C in college students
- 75% potential risk for HCV (risky sex, IDU, snorting cocaine or other drugs, blood transfusion before 1992; tattoos, body piercing, sharing body jewelry)
- At risk for acquiring HCV due to “Incredible lack of awareness and education regarding hepatitis C”

Project website at

www.besmartwithbodyart.com

Contact: Dr. Heather Diaz; 916-278-2503;

diazh@csus.edu

Study Purpose

To evaluate the knowledge and awareness levels of college students about HCV

To develop a bi-campus awareness campaign to reduce HCV risk in college students.

Methods

- Bi-campus/community partnership research project
- A 30 day on-line survey exploring Hep C risk knowledge and risky behavior frequency, based on the Health Belief Model
- Recruitment of students at UC Davis and Sacramento State
- Content validity – survey reviewed by group of healthcare professionals and the Research Survey section of the California Department of Public Health
- Community board partners approved design, instrument, and administration of research

Sample Demo

- n=224 students
- 48% from Sacramento State; 52% UCD
- 59% female; 41% male
- 72% juniors and seniors

Results

Measured:

- Tattoo and piercing prevalence
- Personal assessment of susceptibility for HCV based on high risk behavior engagement
- Knowledge about Hep C risk
- Preference for receiving health information

Tattoo Prevalence:

- 20% have one to more than four tattoos; 43% interested in obtaining first or additional tattoos; 5% acquired in non-professional setting
- Females had more tattoos than males
- 39% have body piercings; 12% in non-professional setting;

Personal Susceptibility:

- More than 34% of respondents reported being “very susceptible, or susceptible” for being at risk for HCV from any of the known ways of transmission
- ~30% said not aware of how HCV is transmitted
- 68% said if getting a tattoo or body piercing put them at risk for HCV, “highly unlikely” they would do so

Knowledge:

- More than 40% “unlikely to experience health risks from tattoo or body piercing from a professional shop”
- ~7% said tattooing and body piercing brought “no health risks”
- ~ 20% weren’t sure if you could be vaccinated against Hep C

Preference for Information:

Majority of students said they wanted info presented in the following ways: 1) Internet Web site, chat room or blog; 2) delivered by a medical spokesperson; 3) with factual, credible evidence in a logical format; 4) and being able to seek health information themselves.

Campaign:

- Website creation: www.besmartwithbodyart.com
- PSA with CSUS and UCD students
- Print media- postcards, flyers, posters; Mailed 1535 posters, and 22,284 cards to date

Testing of campaign in November and December 2010.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN GETTING A TATTOO OR PIERCING

- 1. Do you use only new needles?
(watch the artist open the package)**
- 2. Do you use new ink caps for each client?**
- 3. Do you sterilize all equipment that may come into contact with blood?
(Ask to see sterilization process and log)**
- 4. Do you wear single-use latex gloves?**
- 5. Do you cover fresh tattoos to prevent infection or hepatitis C virus transmission?
(Make sure your tattoo is covered with a sterile, absorbent dressing)**