

# CHANGES IN HEALTH BEHAVIORS IN HIV+ AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN FOLLOWING A HOME-BASED SELF-CARE INTERVENTION

Debra L. Benbow, RN, FNP(s)  
Winston-Salem State University, School of Nursing

Margaret S. Miles, PhD, RN and Beth Black, RN, MSN  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Nursing, CB 7460  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7460

Key Words: health behavior change, home-based intervention, HIV+ women

**Purpose:** African American women with HIV, already faced with many health disparities, do not easily access health care services for HIV treatment due to lack of insurance, cost of care, distance to tertiary care, fear of stigmatization at local health facilities, and caregiving responsibilities. In a self-care intervention study, nurses met with HIV+ women in their homes to help them cope with their diagnosis and learn self-care measures to prolong their lives. This paper describes health behavior changes made by the women during the intervention. **Method:** Participants are 30 women who were randomized into the intervention and completed at least 5 of the 6 home visits. Data for this paper includes the HIV Self-Care Index (SCI) completed at enrollment and at 1 month and 6 months after the intervention. Field notes recorded by the nurses after each contact were also used to identify health behavior changes made by individual participants. Content analysis was used to extract and summarize these behavior changes. **Findings:** Preliminary analysis of the SCI suggests that temperature taking when sick, not missing medical appointments, washing hands, care in preparing food to prevent infection, and more exercise were some of the health behaviors on the tool that were higher at end of study. Attention to symptoms, medication adherence, asking questions during health visits, and use of condoms were behaviors that did not increase. Data analysis of the field notes is underway. Two major themes have emerged: (a) general health behavior changes and (b) sexual health behavior changes. **Discussion.** This home-based intervention was effective in improving some aspects of health behaviors important to individuals with HIV. Still, health behavior change is complex and despite an intensive home-based intervention, many health behaviors of importance were not improved. Further research is needed to understand the complexity of the lives of women with HIV that may impact on their self-care behaviors.