



Dr. Erica Gollub

Dr. Erica Gollub works on women's studies at Center.

Dr. Erica Gollub is currently working on various research projects aimed at developing better HIV/AIDS intervention programs for women. Dr. Gollub came to the Center in October, 1998 with an extensive background in HIV/AIDS research.

After graduating from Columbia University with a doctor of public health (Dr. PH.), she worked in New York at Harlem hospital, working with HIV positive women on interventions to reduce their risks of becoming infected with other sexually transmitted diseases, and transmitting the HIV virus to partners through sex.

Dr. Gollub also worked as the AIDS epidemiologist for the Philadelphia Health Department, studying trends in HIV/AIDS epidemiology in Philadelphia and implementing a large intervention study with women at Health Center One. After leaving the Philadelphia Department of Health she went to France for two years on a Fulbright Fellowship to do work on women, risk reduction, and HIV. She worked mostly with immigrant women from Northern and Western Africa and Asia, looking at the acceptability of various HIV interventions involving education, barrier methods, and sexuality. While in France, Dr. Gollub launched an intervention study that was turned into a national program, run out of the health ministry.

On returning to Philadelphia she began working at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Studies of Addiction with Dr. David Metzger, whom she had consulted as an advisor on epidemiology while she was with the Philadelphia Department of Health. Dr. Metzger had provided advice on various Health Department studies with drug users.

During her two years at the Center, Dr. Gollub has worked on a number of proposals to the National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA) to launch large-scale studies of women drug users in Philadelphia and overseas. At this point she is waiting for approval for three of these studies. Two of these are interventions for women in Africa. Dr. Gollub will be the principle investigator overseeing a research group from France which will run a study in Rwanda. Dr. Gollub will visit the site regularly. She will also be co-investigator on another study based in Africa, this one in Malawi, which will study sexually transmitted disease prevalence changes over time in the rural section of the country. The last study, which will be done in Philadelphia will examine whether the cervical cap can protect women from chlamydia.

At this time, Dr. Gollub is busy analyzing data from the just completed WomenFIT (Women Fighting Infection Together) study. The multi-site study was funded from the HIVNET HPTN,

"Drug using women are very interested in protecting themselves."

and conducted in Philadelphia, New York City, and Providence, Rhode Island. The study was based on a four session intervention model she had worked on in different forms in Harlem and France. The objective of the study was to measure the acceptability of a multiple session group counseling model intervention with peer leaders. Focusing on basic body education, use of women's barrier methods (female condoms, spermicide, diaphragm and cervical cap), "body empowerment theory", risk reduction, sexual behavior, and drug use. The intervention sessions were weekly over one month with a reunion meeting one month after the fourth session ended.

Sessions were approximately two and a half hours long and the women met in stable groups where they could develop familiarity with each other and a sense of solidarity in confronting common challenges to protecting themselves. *(con't on next page)*



Update on Philadelphia FIGHT

Philadelphia FIGHT, located at 1233 Locust Street, offers comprehensive AIDS services, including primary care, education, advocacy, and research. The AIDS Library is also located at FIGHT and is a fantastic resource for information on HIV/AIDS. The library is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 AM to 5 PM and offers computer access and borrowing privileges. FIGHT is also connected to the Critical Path AIDS Project, which was founded by Persons With AIDS (PWAs) and provides information and referrals on the latest in prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. FIGHT sponsors free education and support groups that meet regularly. They include: Food for Thought, a monthly presentation and discussion of HIV related issues; Front Line Forum, a monthly program for case managers, counselors, and others working in the front lines in the battle against HIV/AIDS; Information

To Live By, a monthly education forum, featuring scientists, researchers, and physicians discussing HIV/AIDS medical issues;

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While in the groups, the women exchanged strategies for reducing risk in sexual activity.

The total number of women enrolled in the study was 194 across the three cities. Seventy-five percent were unemployed, 52% percent were living on less than \$500 monthly. Most of the women at the Philadelphia site were smoking crack, but in New York there was more of a mix of crack smoking women and injecting drug users. Even though 92% of women said they had ever used a condom, only 15-20% of their sexual acts were protected at baseline (time of first interview). The vast majority of sex acts were unprotected whether with a main or casual partner. At baseline only 22% of the women had ever used a female condom.

In looking at the acceptability of the intervention across the three sites, Dr. Gollub found that 81% of all sessions were completed and retention rates ranged for 89 to 98% across sites. Sixty-five percent of the women reported they were very satisfied with the intervention, 29% reported they were satisfied, 5% said they were neutral, and 1% said they were dissatisfied. So of all the women in the study 94%

Women's Tea Time, a monthly education group for women living with HIV; Lax Men's Group, a monthly education group for men living with HIV; and Faith, Hope, and Love, a weekly support group for people living with AIDS which concentrates on family issues. The newest FIGHT program is Teach Outside, which is a training and education program for HIV positive people who have been released from prison within the last year. The program coordinator is Asia Russell.

Upcoming special events at FIGHT include "A New Epidemic: Hepatitis C", a talk by Dr. Kenneth D. Rothstein, associate director at the Center for Liver Disease at Albert Einstein Medical Center. The event will be held on March 28, from 3 PM to 5 PM at St. Luke's & the Epiphany Church, 330 South 13th Street. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.

Philadelphia FIGHT is always in need of volunteers to help with its important work in the community. Volunteers are needed to help with mail preparation, computer data entry, clerical support, outreach, and many other important tasks.

For more information about volunteering, services, events, or educational information call Philadelphia FIGHT at (215) 985-4448.

87% of the women took home a female condom during the study.

were very satisfied or satisfied with intervention.

In evaluating how the study helped them, 78% of the women said that the study made them feel more comfortable about their bodies, 59% said they were now more comfortable talking with their sexual partner, and 84% reported the intervention reduced

their risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. In evaluating what they liked best about the study, the highest percentage of women said they liked best talking in the group sessions with other women (41%). Eighty-seven percent of the women took home a female condom during the study, and 57% reported they used the female condom more than once.

Dr. Gollub is now trying to get funding to make this a larger study extending over a longer period of time. She feels that "the study is an important demonstration that drug using women will come to intervention groups and partake in discussions. Drug using women are very interested in protecting themselves and will participate in studies that are relevant and meaningful to them."



Spotlight on Chelsea Voytek-- RAP Staff.

Chelsea Voytek came to work in the RAP office at 5th and Girard in June 2000, after returning from sixteen months in Haiti working as an administrator in a community health program. The program was in a hospital in rural Haiti. Before going to Haiti Ms. Voytek was associate director of Prevention Point Philadelphia, where she worked for four years. The most enjoyable part of her experience in Haiti was the four months she spent doing an assessment of HIV/AIDS services, and community health delivery services provided by a hospital to residents in the service delivery area. Ms. Voytek also researched HIV prevention and care provision in Haiti in general. She went to Haiti because she had always been interested in the country and wanted to expand her Philadelphia public health experience into an international setting. Ms. Voytek is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where she received a B.A. in anthropology. In May she will begin graduate school to get her Masters in Public Health.

Ms. Voytek is a former CAB member who represented Prevention Point Philadelphia. She left the CAB when she went to Haiti. Ms. Voytek has always enjoyed working with the participants in Project RAP studies, and has always had respect for the research done by Project RAP. She hopes to work in international HIV/AIDS research and prevention programs.

Spotlight on Valerie Simpson- RAP CAB.

Valerie Simpson has been a Community Advisory Board member since 1989. She became involved with the CAB while participating in the RAP study operating out the the RAP office on 5th and Girard. When she was asked to join the CAB she agreed because because she liked the idea of being a liaison between HIV/AIDS researchers and the community. Ms. Simpson says, "I felt the community needed to know what was going on." For the last four years Ms. Simpson has been the co-chairperson of the CAB along with Dr. David Metzger. Ms. Simpson is also on the protocol team for the new Social Network Project.

During her years of involvement with the CAB Ms. Simpson has participated in the making of several educational videos that were created by the Center. These videos chronicled the objectives and challenges of doing HIV/AIDS research in the drug using

community. Ms. Simpson appreciates the information that she and other CAB members receive at meetings and she has also enjoyed attending several conferences in such diverse places as Arizona, California, Washington, and Maryland. She says, "The conferences were very informative and I got to meet a lot of people. I got to put faces to names, meeting out-of-state CAB members and researchers." Ms. Simpson's goals for the CAB are to continue with community education and outreach. She would like to see more community meetings and be more interactive with the community.

Ms. Simpson enjoys writing poetry, working with her hands, going to movies and plays, and meeting new people. She has made many new friends with fellow CAB members. Ms. Simpson has lived in Philadelphia all her life. She is a member of the True Vine Church on Lehigh Avenue. She is on the Usher Board and attends their Bible Institute. She is in the first year of the three year program. She would like to someday do missionary work in Africa to help people there, particularly in rural areas. Ms. Simpson is currently in recovery and attends the Goldman Clinic, where her counselor, Mamie Harris plays a big part in her recover. But she attributes her ultimate success to God. "I tried everything man had to offer so I turned to God."



Chelsea Voytek

*"Valerie Simpson
has been a CAB
member since
1989."*



Valerie Simpson

Cancer Drug in the News.

OxyContin, a powerful narcotic painkiller, used for terminal cancer patients, has been the subject of numerous news stories recently. The drug, which is produced by Purdue Pharma, was heavily marketed since its introduction in 1995 and has now reached sales of one billion dollars.

Originally, abuse of the drug appeared in rural areas of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, Maine, Maryland, and Ohio, but it is being seen now in major cities. Since November, the deaths of at least 20 people in Philadelphia have been tied to OxyContin. Federal officials stated that 28 people in Virginia and 59 in Kentucky have died of OxyContin overdoses. But officials at Purdue Pharma are disputing the number of deaths attributed to the drug. After Joseph L. Famular, the United States attorney for the eastern district of Kentucky attributed 59 deaths to the drug, Dr. J. David Haddox, medical director for Purdue Pharma said, "I'm concerned about inflammatory statements like that." Nonetheless, law enforcement groups and drug treatment providers are trying to get the word out about abuse of the drug.

The drug is particularly dangerous if used in combination with alcohol or other drugs. OxyContin is a respiratory depressant, and when used with another drug or alcohol that also depresses respiration, it can be fatal. Edward Barbieri, a toxicologist from Willow Grove says the drug is also more dangerous when chewed or crushed and taken orally.

Sources:
*The New York Times and
The Associated Press*

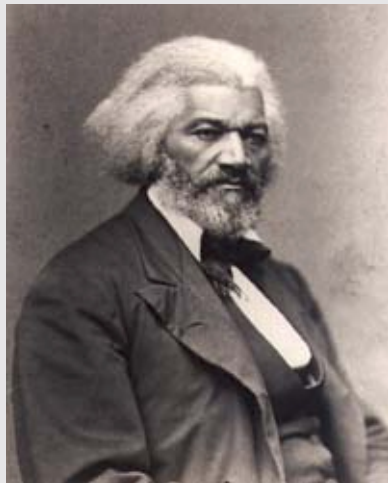
Quote of the Month.

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are people who want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will. *Frederick Douglass, Canandaigua, N. Y.*

Frederick Douglass



University of Pennsylvania
Project RAP
Raising Awareness About
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CAB News

Poetry Corner

Friends

by Valerie Simpson

Having a true friend is very rare
When you need someone, for whatever,
a friend is always there
Friends are not in it for the money
Friends are not to be thought of as a honey
Some people live a lifetime without a friend
I pray everyday that our friendship will never end
A true friends is more valuable than diamonds
or gold
I hope our friendship will last
even after we get old
We will continue to be there for each other
Our friendship will continue to grow
and go further
It feels good to know you are a part of me
We are as close as two friends could be!

If I can stop one heart

by Emily Dickinson

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.