

HPTN Group Meets to Discuss Recruitment and Procedures for Social Network Study



HPTN Site Map

On Tuesday, August 14th members of the HPTN, Project RAP staff, and representatives of the Project RAP Community Advisory Board met in Philadelphia to discuss recruiting and procedures for the upcoming Social Network Study in Philadelphia and Thailand. Present from John Hopkins University were Carl Latkin, the protocol chair for the Social Network Study; David Celentano, principle investigator for the Thailand site, and Susan Shermann, a network intervention specialist. Present from the Philadelphia site were Dr. David Metzger; Helen Navaline; Annet Davis-Vogel; Roseanne Scotti; Danielle Fiore; Rasanjali Wickrema; and Steve Hutchins. CAB members included Valeria Simpson, who is on the protocol team; JoAnn Williams; Kathy Rigby and Ernest Jones. Also attending the meeting were researchers and staff from the study site in Chaingmai, Thailand.

The day long meeting began with a presentation by Dr. Metzger. Dr. Metzger gave an overview of the computerized participant database used by Project RAP for previous studies and discussed how the system facilitates recruitment and retention. The group then brainstormed on strategies for recruitment of participants for the Social Network Study. During the discussions that followed, Community Advisory Board members provided valuable insights into the drug scene in

Philadelphia. Discussions included the history of syringe access and use, and use of drugs such as paregoric as substitutes for heroin during "dry spells."

Group members then took a tour of West Philadelphia to look at "risk pockets" within the neighborhood. Dr. Metzger explained that these "risk pockets" are the areas where there is a high concentration of drug sales, drug use, and sexual activity. Such risk pockets can be found throughout the city of Philadelphia, and these areas will be targeted in the recruitment for the Social Network Study.

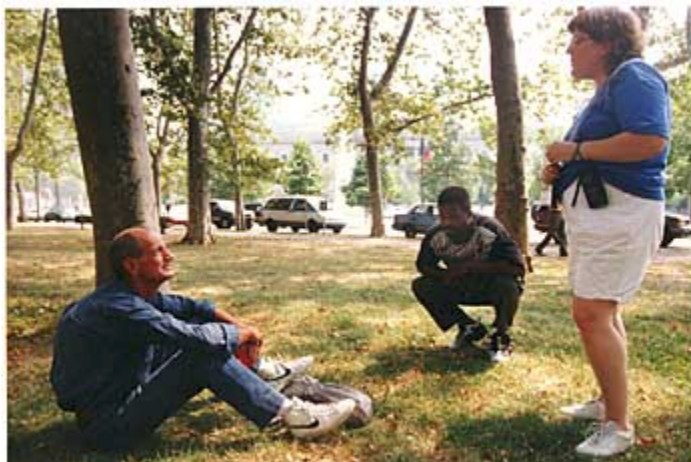
After this, the group headed to the RAP Office at 5th and Girard where discussion continued about recruitment for both sites. The group also generated a list of tasks which must be completed by the time the study starts recruitment in the spring. Items discussed included where and how to prescreen participants, and how to assist study index members in identifying members of their social network. This last discussion was facilitated by the work that was done on July 26 at the last RAP Community Advisory Board meeting. At that meeting CAB members and RAP project staff had discussed the meaning of social networks and how best to identify social network members.

Finally the group discussed plans for future trainings for the RAP staff on social network research. A training session at John Hopkins is planned so the staff can hone their interviewing skills and familiarize themselves with the study protocol.

The participation of the Community Advisory Board members in these discussions was extremely valuable. CAB representatives ensured that the conversation was "kept real" and that the researchers were always aware of the realities of recruitment among drug users in Philadelphia. The full CAB will continue to be involved in the development of this study. Susan Shermann and Carl Latkin agreed to return to discuss the study and to get feedback at future CAB meetings. ■



Project Home: Helping Individuals and Revitalizing Neighborhoods



A Project H.O.M.E. outreach worker offers help to a homeless man.

Project H.O.M.E. began with the collaborative effort of two programs, Bethesda Project and Women of Hope. In 1988-1989 these programs joined their resources and personnel to address the needs of the homeless in Philadelphia.

Project H.O.M.E. offers a variety of services to those in need of housing assistance. Starting with street outreach to the homeless and including entry level and transitional housing, permanent housing, health care, mental health and recovery services, education, and employment. This "continuum of care" was developed to address the many and complex issues facing the homeless.

Project H.O.M.E. also runs two businesses, which employ formerly homeless individuals and generate much needed revenue. Back Home Cafe & Catering, located at 1515 Fairmount Avenue, provides employment opportunities, income, and job skills for people trying to rebuild their lives. The cafe is open Monday through Friday 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. If you can't make it to the Cafe, consider hiring Down Home to cater your next private party or business affair!

Our Daily Threads Thrift Store provides job opportunities for formerly homeless individuals as well as a source of low-cost clothing for the community. Our Daily Threads is located next to Down Home Cafe and has the same hours of operation. Donations to the thrift store are always welcome.

Of course no discussion of Project H.O.M.E. would be complete without mentioning its amazing executive director, Sister Mary Scullion. Sister Mary has worked with the homeless since 1978 and is the driving force behind Project H.O.M.E. She co-founded Women of Hope in 1985 and Project H.O.M.E. in 1989. Starting with one emergency shelter Sister Mary has overseen Project H.O.M.E.'s development into an organization with 273 units of housing, and several business ventures. Her tireless advocacy on behalf of the poor and homeless has earned her several awards and has made her a nationally known force in the field of homeless advocacy.

Providing this level of help and support is a huge undertaking and requires significant resources and support. If you would like to help Project H.O.M.E. help others, there are a number of ways to do this. Project H.O.M.E. is always in need of financial resources to carry out its work. Donations can be sent directly to Project H.O.M.E. or done over the internet at www.givingcapital.com/campaign. Project H.O.M.E. also needs supplies to stock its offices and various

housing units. Items such as towels, sheets, toiletries, cleaning supplies, kitchen appliances, and school supplies are appreciated. For a full list of items go to www.projecthome.net/help/wish. Patronizing Project H.O.M.E.'s businesses, the Back Home Cafe & Catering, and Our Daily Threads Thrift Store are also great ways to help. And of course you can always volunteer your time and get to see Project H.O.M.E. in action!

And if you see someone on the streets of Philadelphia who appears to be homeless or in need of help please call Project H.O.M.E. at their Outreach Hotline (215) 232-1984. An outreach team will be sent to assist.

To find out more about Project H.O.M.E. call (215) 232-7272 or visit their website.

*Source: Project H.O.M.E. website:
www.projecthome.net*

Call for Articles

The Harm Reduction Coalition is looking for articles for its Winter 2001 newsletter. The newsletter will be published at the end of December and submissions can be sent immediately. The articles should deal with harm reduction in personal, political, or service settings. Articles from front-line harm reduction workers and drug users are especially important. If you would like to submit an article send it to:

Allan Clear
Executive Director
Harm Reduction Coalition
22 W. 27th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
or via e-mail:
clear@harmreduction.org

Project RAP West Philadelphia Office Moving in September

On September 8, 2001 Project RAP's West Philadelphia Office will move from its current location at Building 3, University and Woodland Avenues to 3535 Market Street. All Project RAP staff and researchers will be located on the 4th floor of the building. In addition, the group will be getting new phone numbers. All staff and researchers can be contacted through the reception desk at (215) 746-7355

RAP Office Gets New Research Coordinator for LT/LI Study

Steven Hutchins joined the RAP Office in June, as the new research

coordinator for the LT/LI study. Mr. Hutchins' duties include administering protocol for studies, monitoring staff performance, and interviewing clients for the LT/LI and Substance P studies. He will also be doing interviews for the upcoming Social Network Study.

Mr. Hutchins graduated from Lincoln University with a degree in Business Administration and got his masters from Lincoln in Human Services. He also has a doctorate in Education from the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara California. Mr. Hutchins has worked mostly in health care administration in managed care. He has worked in behavioral health and network administration, working with doctors and hospitals. Part of his behavioral health experience involved evaluating and assessing the needs of people seeking substance abuse and mental health services. Mr. Hutchins also serviced and facilitated contacts with physicians, therapists, hospitals, and free standing mental health sites.

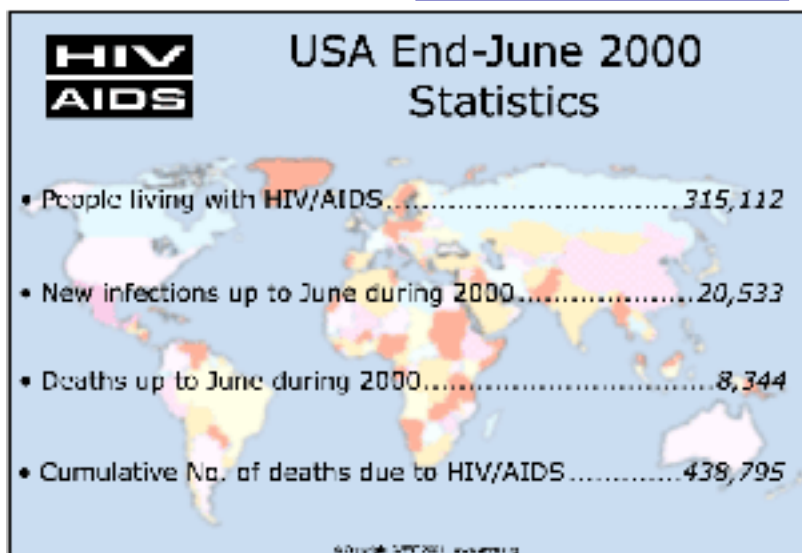


Steven Hutchins

Mr. Hutchins graduated from Lincoln University with a degree in Business Administration and got his masters from Lincoln in Human Services.

Mr. Hutchins' interest in moving away from the private sector and back to public sector health education, led him to seek a position at the RAP Office. So far Mr. Hutchins has enjoyed working with RAP study participants and is finding his new job interesting and challenging. Besides his duties at the RAP Office he has been able to attend a couple CAB meetings and was present at the recent HPTN meeting here in Philadelphia.

Mr. Hutchins also teaches at Lincoln University and Pierce University conducting classes in thesis preparation and professional ethics. When not working he likes to relax by watching movies and sports. As a Philadelphia native, Mr. Hutchins is an avid fan of Philadelphia sports teams.



RAP CAB

Co-Chair:

Valeria Simpson

Co-Chair:

David Metzger

Secretary:

Thelma Henry

Sergeant at Arms:

JoAnn Williams

Sergeant at Arms:

Lawrence Savage

Members:

Rosalie Branch

Margaret Brown

Susan Carnett

Chenita Frierson

Emanuel Hamilton

Drew Kearney

Cecelia Laurenzi

Gaylord Mercer

Bobbi O'Donnell

Lora Pearson

Kathy Rigby

Patricia Shields

Sondra Smith

Charles Tucker

In The News

The following story appeared in issue 198 of The Week Online with DRCNet

A civil lawsuit filed last November on behalf of injection drug users is now on the verge of blossoming into a class action lawsuit. "James Roe," "John B.," and Hilton Perez, all card-carrying members of a legally operating needle exchange program (NEP) were arrested by the New York Police Department (NYPD) in different incidents in the last two years. "Roe," for example, was arrested in a Greenwich Village anti-drug sweep in 1999 after police found traces of heroin in a syringe he carried. Attorneys for the Urban Justice Center's Harm Reduction Legal Project filed suit against the city, arguing that police illegally targeted registered NEP participants who, under a special provision of city law, could legally possess syringes (see <http://www.drcnet.org/wol/165.html#needle2> for background).

According to the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center on Avenue C, where "Roe" got his needles, clients were often caught up in police anti-drug dragnets. NEP registration cards sometimes worked to prevent arrest, but other times they did not. "Roe" told the New York Times that police cut up his NEP card during his arrest.

In an August 1 ruling, federal district court Judge Robert Sweet, well-known advocate for drug reform, granted a motion asking that the suit be considered for

class-action status, meaning that other registered injection drug users arrested by police could join the lawsuit.

Because the plaintiff is seeking monetary damages, the granting of class-action status could have a significant financial impact on the city in the event of a victory.

"At least one hundred and as many as 5,000 people" arrested by the NYPD while registered as NEP participants could join the suit, Urban Justice Center attorney Corrine Carey told DRCNet. Carey added that the case could affect all NEP participants, some 30,000 people. "We're trying to cover all of the people who are members or potential members of the program," said Carey. "Although the press coverage said we got class-action status, that is a little premature.

Judge Sweet allowed us to amend our complaint to include class allegations," she explained. "That is an indication that the judge will grant class-action status."

But Carey and the plaintiffs are seeking more than monetary damages; they want positive change in the city's, and particularly, the NYPD's approach to NEPs and their clients. "We are asking that those people who are enrolled in NEPs or potentially enrolled not be arrested for drug possession charges based on unusable residue in syringes," said Carey. "NEPs won't work if people can't carry needles with residues. We're also asking for more training for police officers," Carey added, "because it is clear under the law that you can't be arrested, but it continues to happen. And we are asking that people who don't have their cards on them at the time not be arrested pending investigation. People shouldn't be arrested for having syringes," she said.

The needle exchange program supplies more than 3 million needles each year in New York City in an effort to stem the spread of AIDS and other infectious diseases. The program is taxpayer funded and had worked with city officials to craft an exception from drug paraphernalia laws for program participants.

The editorial page writers at Rupert Murdoch's New York Post took great exception to Sweet's ruling, and they weren't too happy with the Urban Justice Center, either. In an editorial permeated with derogatory, emotion-laden rhetoric --it ran under the header, "The Druggies' Judge" -- the Post maintained that: "Sweet, in his ongoing bid to strike down every law against the use of dangerous drugs, has now opened a door that could wipe out the NYPD's highly effective sweeps of high-drug areas. This ruling was part of "the judge's larger drug-legalization campaign," the Post thundered.

As for the Urban Justice Center, a nonprofit organization that advocates for poor and homeless New Yorkers, the Post was still irritated with it for daring to challenge the city's policy of forcing the city's homeless into shelters. While the Center argues that NEPs are a harm reduction measure that serve the public health and that police harassment of program participants thus threatens the public health--a notion the Post finds "preposterous" -- the Post's editorial writers deign to tell their readers "what this case really is about: A left-wing activist group intent on blocking every effort to bring positive change to this city, and a judge who likewise thinks that New York would be better off if drugs were available for the asking."

"That's the Post for you," laughed Carey. "The Human Rights Law Project is committed to idea of harm reduction and opposing those laws which cause more harm than the drugs themselves. We work on a number of different issues for this city's most down-trodden."

Quote of the Month.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



University of Pennsylvania
Project RAP
Raising Awareness About
Public Health

**To Contact Project RAP
Call Toll Free:
1-800-528-5527**