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MSM Smokers Entrenched in Smoking Attitudes and Beliefs

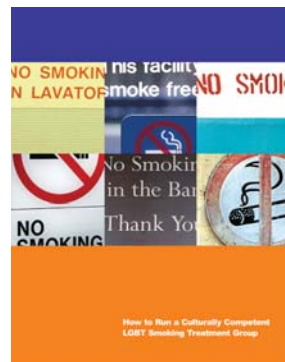
By: Blase Masini, Ph.D. and Alicia Matthews, Ph.D.

Smoking accounts for 30% of all cancer-related deaths in our society and remains the leading preventable cause of illness and death in the U.S. In 2004, an estimated 21% of U.S. adults were current smokers. However, smoking rates vary substantially across population subgroups. Research suggests that men who have sex with men (MSM) have significantly higher smoking rates compared to heterosexuals^{1,2}.

Smoking attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in adults are influenced by a multitude of factors, including race/ethnicity, age, education, income, and sexual orientation. Latino men reported perceptions of smoking as a weakness rather than illness. They revealed mistrust of nicotine replacement therapy and antidepressants used for smoking cessation³.

Factors thought to contribute to higher smoking rates in MSM – and the larger lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community – include stress associated with homophobia and discrimination, social norms that support smoking, higher rates of behaviors that correlate with smoking such as alcohol use, and direct marketing to the LGBT communities by tobacco companies.

To understand smoking behaviors and inform interventions, research conducted at Howard Brown⁴ analyzed the attitudes and beliefs of an ethnically diverse sample of urban gay male smokers. Minority MSM smokers stood out as more entrenched in their smoking attitudes. In particular, Latino men were significantly less likely to want to quit, intend to quit, or have confidence to quit. (See figures on next page for racial/ethnic breakdown.)



To download a pdf copy of the smoking treatment group book, go to www.howardbrown.org.

These findings bring to light the challenge of promoting smoking cessation among MSMs of color and other sexual minorities. Fortunately, researchers at Howard Brown can draw from lessons learned during a three-year, multi-site study exploring smoking cessation treatment for the LGBT communities.

Howard Brown, along with The National LGBT Tobacco Control Network and The

Fenway Institute, has released "How to Run a Culturally Competent Smoking Treatment Group." This 20-page book distills lessons learned from more than 20 LGBT treatment groups across the country as part of an American Legacy Foundation research project. The book, which includes information about how to

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(MSM Smokers, from page 1)

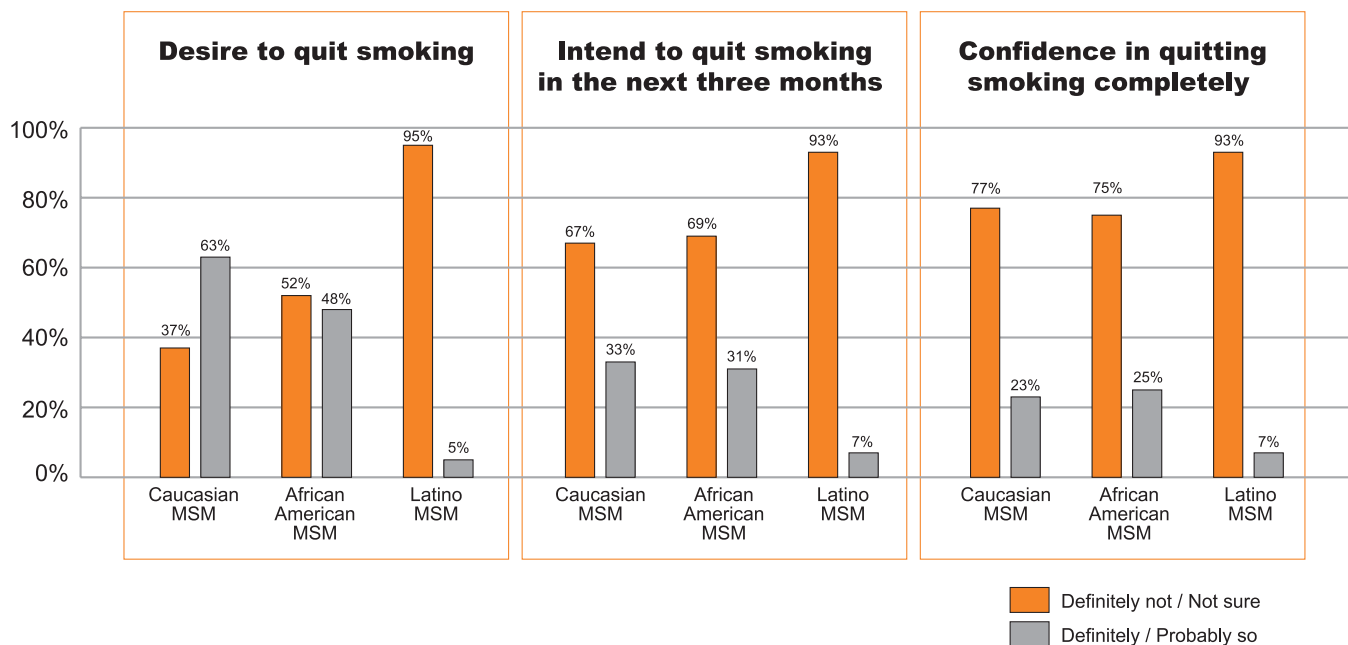
conduct outreach and tailor curriculum, can be downloaded from our web site, www.howardbrown.org.

At a time when the LGBT community is targeted for increased tobacco consumption, this book is important for a number of reasons:

- There is increased awareness of the disproportionate impact of smoking in the LGBT communities;
- More people, organizations, and state departments of health are looking to provide culturally competent efforts to counter it; and,
- This is the first document that gives in-depth instructions on how to run a

tobacco treatment group that is tailored for the LGBT community.

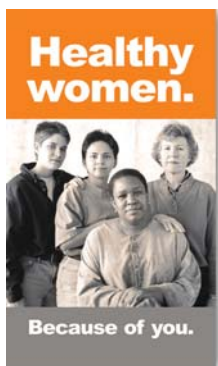
This information is likely to be applicable to programs targeting all disproportionately impacted communities. LGBT people from every walk of life participated in the treatment groups, and the insight we have gained will continue to inform our work in reducing the number of LGBT smokers.



¹Lampinen, T.M., Bonner, S.J., Rusch, M., & Hogg, R.S. (2006). High prevalence of smoking among urban-dwelling Canadian men who have sex with men. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 83, 1143-1150.
²Levinson, A. H., Borrara, E.A., Espinoza, P., Flores, E. T., and Perez-Stable, E. J. (2006). An exploration of Latino smokers and the use of pharmaceutical aids. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 31, 167-171.
³McKirnan, D.J., Tolou-Shams, M., Turner, L., Dyslin, K., & Hope, B. (2006). Elevated risk for tobacco use among men who have sex with men is identified by demographic and psychosocial variables. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 41, 1197-1208.
⁴Matthews, A. K., Masini, B. E., and McKirnan, D. J. (In progress). Ethnic Differences in Smoking Cessation Stage of Readiness in Men Who Have Sex with Men: The Mediating Effect of Smoking Entrenchment.

Misconceptions of WSW’s health issues hinder screenings

“My doctor said lesbians don’t have to get Pap tests.” That’s one of the most common reasons women who have sex with women (WSW) don’t get screened for cervical cancer according to preliminary focus group research conducted by Howard Brown.



Recruitment materials for the pilot study included palm cards, above.

Many health care providers and patients share the false assumption that women who are not sexually active with men

are not at risk for contracting the human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes 70% of all cervical cancer. As a result WSW may go without annual Pap tests. Misinformed health care providers may spread bad advice, which means fewer health screenings for women who are equally vulnerable to cervical cancer.

Our pilot study, funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health, aims to learn more about how to increase the number

of WSW who are screened for both cervical and breast cancer. We have used the focus group insights to tailor our intervention: health education paired with the help of trained volunteer patient navigators, who will help WSW get the health care they need.

In addition to basic cancer information and screening guidelines, WSW will have access to tools that help them find culturally competent providers and communicate their sexual orientation including unique health care needs. We expect to share our results in the next issue of this newsletter.

New roles and new faces in research at Howard Brown

Research at Howard Brown continues to grow thanks to the expertise and commitment of our talented staff. We're happy to share our good news about the changes in our group.



Jason Bird, MSW, has been named manager of research compliance. Jason will be responsible for the development of a comprehensive

human subjects protection program, and will supervise all aspects of research compliance including training and education, adherence to protocols, data security, and standardization of research practices. Jason has worked in our research department for the past seven years in many roles including counselor, project coordinator, and developer of protocols. He has focused his energy on HIV prevention and treatment with special emphasis on the effects of social interaction in sexual decision making. Jason is also enrolled full-time in the doctoral program at the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago. When he is not herding his assortment of house pets – six of them – he likes to spend his free time outdoors hiking or camping.



Natalie Kaech has transitioned to coordinator for the HIV/HCV co-infection study examining disease progression in the liver. People

with confirmed hepatitis C virus seropositivity and HIV seropositivity will undergo testing to stage their liver disease. Among those who are identified with active hepatitis C viremia, further evaluation will estimate the degree of liver fibrosis. Patients will also learn about liver disease progression and the importance of follow up with their health care providers. For the last three years, Natalie has been the manager of clinical research at Howard Brown. Her new role will allow her more time to devote to her studies at DePaul University where she

is working toward her master's of science degree in nursing and, ultimately, her licensure as a nurse practitioner. In her free time, Natalie likes to blow off steam with urban gymnastics – jumping, flipping, and climbing among Chicago's many tall buildings.



John Steven Cummins has assumed the roles of IRB administrator facilitating communication between principal

investigators, study coordinators, and our institutional review board, and clinical research coordinator managing the Abbott Kaletra trial, and the upcoming HIV/HCV Hepascore trial. Prior to joining our research department, John was a program evaluation coordinator in Howard Brown's HIV/STD prevention department. In that role, he managed a team of outreach volunteers, and coordinated a clinic evaluation study through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). John finished a master's of fine arts degree – he's a published poet – last spring and immediately enrolled at Northwestern University to fulfill the requirements for medical school. This summer he is looking forward to getting some decent sleep and, biking his favorite trail on the northwest side of the city.



Margarita Verano has been hired as the coordinator of our Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS). As the longest running HIV study in the

world, MACS has been funded by the National Institutes of Health since 1983, and Howard Brown has recruited more than 1,000 participants since then. Born and raised in Miami, Margarita moved to Chicago a year ago to work as a supervisor at Lifelink, a child welfare agency for Latino families. She has two master's degrees – one in mass communication, and the other in psychology – and experience in

neuropsychological research. She admits that her first winter in the Windy City was tough, "I've never shoveled snow or owned a winter coat." Now, she's looking forward to the rooftop parties and street festivals that make summertime here so much fun.



Chandra Matteson has accepted the role of clinical research nurse liaison between Howard Brown and Children's Memorial Hospital. The two

organizations have partnered with the Adolescent Trials Network to participate in studies that will evaluate both clinical and behavioral interventions among HIV positive teens and young adults. Chandra, a registered nurse, had previously coordinated a clinical trial to determine the efficacy of the Gardasil vaccine in preventing the human papillomavirus (HPV) among young men. She now divides her time between offices at Howard Brown and Children's Memorial Hospital. This summer, Chandra looks forward to working at her family's farm in central Illinois. She particularly enjoys wielding a chain saw among the acres of forests. The property includes a barn for their horses, and corn and soy fields.



Julianne Buenting has assumed the role of clinical coordinator for the Gardasil/HPV study. She comes to Howard Brown from the University of

Chicago where she worked as a nurse practitioner and clinical coordinator in oncology research. A native of New York, Julianne holds master's and doctoral degrees in nursing. She is certified as a nurse practitioner and as an advanced oncology nurse. She also studies theology, and is a postulant for ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church.

Howard Brown awarded grant to address HIV in African-American MSM

Howard Brown and the South Side Help Center – the largest African-American LGBT service center in Chicago – will develop and test a behavioral intervention to reduce sexual risk behavior and decrease acquisition/ transmission of HIV among African-American men who have sex with men (MSM). The pilot study, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), aims to design a tailored, theory-based intervention for a diverse sample of HIV positive and negative African-American MSM.

Despite all that is known about HIV prevention there continues to be some 40,000 new HIV infections each year, with steady or increasing incidence among MSM. Although African-Americans make up only 13% of the U.S.

population, one-half of the estimated new numbers are among African Americans, and many African-American MSM – particularly younger men – are unaware of their HIV-positive status.

The intervention treatment group will be contrasted with a “standard of care” comparison group who will receive HIV testing and counseling (for negatives) or risk reduction counseling services (for positives) at baseline and follow-up. The primary outcomes will be evidence of intervention feasibility, indexed by recruitment and retention of high risk African-American MSM, and intervention efficacy, assessed via self-reported risk behavior over 3-5 months of follow up.

Although African Americans make up only 13% of the U.S. population, they represent nearly one-half of the new HIV infections each year.



Howard Brown

**4025 North Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60613
(773) 388-1600**

Services at the main location include all medical services, behavioral health and social services, research, youth services, case management, and the Walk-in Clinic. This location serves the community as the preeminent source for LGBT health care. Most HMO/PPO plans accepted.

**TRIAD Health Practice
3000 North Halsted Street,
Suite 711
Chicago, IL 60657
(773) 296-8400**

TRIAD Health Practice provides all of our medical services, including primary care, gynecological services, family planning, and health screenings and check-ups. TRIAD accepts both HMO and PPO plans, and provides on-site parking.

**Broadway Youth Center (BYC)
3179 N. Broadway
Chicago, IL 60657
(773) 935-3151**

BYC is a program of Howard Brown and our community partners, offering comprehensive services to all youth 24 and under. Services include: case management for youth who need help with housing, job placement or basic needs; HIV testing and STD screening and treatment; medical services and education; individual and group counseling; and drop-in services including computer and internet use, laundry, food, and shower facilities.

Participate in a research study!

We need HIV-positive volunteers to take part in a research study. The study will look at different ways to confirm new rapid HIV test results.

**Call 773-388-8683
for more info.**

Taking part would involve:

- getting information on the study
- signing a consent form
- having blood and oral fluid collected for lab tests
- answering some questions

Payment is available for qualified study subjects. Study subjects must be 18-55 years of age.



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EVERY DAY.

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Andersonville: 5404 N. Clark
Wicker Park: 1459 N. Milwaukee
Oak Park: 217 Harrison**

**Schedule your pick up online at
www.howardbrown.org/be
or call 773-549-5943**