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Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS
at Yale University

Interdisciplinary HIV Research Seminar

“Multi-level Interventions to Prevent HIV and Improve Mental Health Among Stigmatized Men in Romania”

Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, PhD, Assistant
Professor, Rutgers School of Nursing

“Multi-Level Intervention Addressing Intersectional Stigma to Improve HIV Testing in MSM in Ghana”

Han-Zhu Qian, MD, PhD, Research Scientist, Yale
School of Public Health



Thursday, May 7

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Join us by Zoom:

<https://yale.zoom.us/j/91826618991>

**Presenters will each share their experiences developing multi-level HIV interventions
in low and middle-income settings, followed by a group discussion.**

Contact Daniel Davidson (<mailto:daniel.davidson@yale.edu>) for questions.

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Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, PhD, Rutgers School of Nursing

“Multi-level Interventions to Prevent HIV and Improve Mental Health Among Stigmatized Men in Romania”

Abstract:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals present increased morbidity compared to the general population, which is largely attributed to discrimination and a lack of LGBT-specific expertise in healthcare settings, especially in high-stigma countries. Motivated by fear, Romanian LGBT persons conceal their identities and report significantly more barriers to healthcare access than heterosexuals. Romania is an Eastern European country where structural stigma against LGBT persons is one of the highest in the region. Independent reports indicate that HIV rates among Romanian gay and bisexual men have increased significantly in the past decade, yet this HIV-risk group remains under-prioritized. Furthermore, poor mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, is elevated for Romanian LGBT individuals, and associated with poor physical health (e.g., HIV risk, alcohol abuse.) However, LGBT-competent healthcare providers are nearly non-existent in Romania, and thus the negative impact of homo/transphobia on mental and physical health remains unaddressed. This talk will illustrate the successful testing of two pilot interventions using mobile health (mHealth) technologies, one at the individual level and one at the provider level. The individual level intervention delivered 8 live chat counseling sessions alongside real-time risk behavior tracking on mobile devices to reduce HIV risk and hazardous alcohol consumption and improve mental health for at-risk Romanian gay and bisexual men. The provider level intervention was a non-inferiority trial testing the relative feasibility and efficacy of an mHealth mental health provider training via a randomized controlled trial comparing a mobile training of an LGBT-competency program to an equivalent in-person training. Providers received two boosters and 8 monthly supervision sessions remotely and were followed across 15 months. Results from both trials and their future transformation to form a single multi-level intervention will be discussed.

Bio:

As an applied social psychologist, Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger has worked for over a decade at the intersection of social science and public health, primarily aiming to address the relationship between stigma and health inequities, both nationally and internationally. Since 2009, she served as principal investigator of five, and co-investigator of three studies funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Fogarty International Center, National of Institute of Mental Health, and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Corina's work combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies with technology in order to understand socially-driven health outcomes, and the mechanisms that facilitate these relationships in order to modify them. She designs and leads randomized controlled trials focused on HIV, mental health, and substance use among marginalized groups, including people of color and sexual and gender minorities, specifically to address barriers to health related to stigma, racism, homophobia and/or transphobia. She has implemented interventions in the US and Eastern Europe for both the individuals affected by these relationships, and the systems that affect their health (primary care, infectious disease, and mental health providers/clinics). Lastly, Corina has examined barriers to and facilitators of access to pre-exposure prophylaxis in order to maximize uptake by groups in most need of this powerful biomedical prevention tool.

Han-Zhu Qian, MD, PhD, Yale School of Public Health

“Multi-Level Intervention Addressing Intersectional Stigma to Improve HIV Testing in MSM in Ghana”

Abstract:

Men who have sex with men (MSM) in Ghana face high levels of stigma due to HIV status (actual or perceived), same-sex behavior, and gender non-conformity. These stigmas are documented barriers to HIV prevention and treatment. We propose a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability and estimate effect size of a multi-component, multi-level (organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal-level) intersectional stigma-reduction intervention to increase HIV testing frequency among MSM in Ghana. To date, stigma-reduction interventions in Ghana have focused on uni-level targets (e.g., health care facilities (HCFs)) and addressed one type of stigma (e.g., HIV), without engaging the intersectional character of the multiple stigmas that MSM encounter. We will combine three theory-based interventions that were previously implemented separately in Ghana for reducing stigma at HCF-level, increasing HIV testing at the peer group-level, and increasing peer social support at the individual-level. I will present intervention development, study design of a RCT, and data analysis plan.

Bio:

Dr. Han-Zhu Qian is an infectious disease epidemiologist. Prior to joining the Yale School of Public Health faculty in 2017, he was a health scientist at U.S. Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (2016-2017), where he provided technical supports for the HIV treatment programs among key populations in Asian countries. He also served as a faculty member in Vanderbilt University (2007-2016) and University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) (2005-2007). He conducts epidemiological studies and prevention intervention clinical trials on HIV, HCV, HPV and other blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections among key and vulnerable populations in U.S. and global settings.