



**Health Care Action Group
Summary of April 23, 2014 Conference Call**

Participants:

Eileen Beard – American College of Nurse-Midwives
Alfonso Carlon – Cardea Services
Eli Coleman – University of Minnesota, Program in Human Sexuality
Jaclyn Fontanella – Partnership for Prevention
Donna Futterman – Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Adolescent AIDS Program
Susan Gilbert – Partnership for Prevention
Michael Horberg
Karen Horsch – Partnership for Prevention
Alyson Kristensen – Partnership for Prevention
Penny Loosier – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Arik Marcell
Lilly Pinto – Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health
Sharon Rachel – Morehouse Center of Excellence in Sexual Health
Claire Rudolph – NIHCM Foundation
Chris Thrasher – Morehouse Center of Excellence in Sexual Health

Discussion to determine scope of work for provider-oriented activities

The call began with a big-picture discussion to determine which provider-oriented activities the HCAG would undertake for the remainder of 2014 and into 2015, drawing from initial ideas discussed during the December 3, 2013 HCAG call. Today, the HCAG decided to focus on developing a companion guide for providers that would include: (1) recommended sexual health questions every provider should ask every patient, along with brief scripts to help the provider initiate the discussion, (2) standard responses to the questions posed in the sexual health guide for consumers (Take Charge of Your Sexual Health: what you need to know about preventive services), (3) information about recommended tests that providers should order for patients, and (4) any other relevant information that has yet to be determined.

This guide will be one of the signature NCSH products for 2015. It will be pre-tested with different provider groups and modified to incorporate feedback before being released. This will help to ensure that the NCSH develops a resource that will be appealing, useful, and relevant to the target audience. A webinar to promote the guide for providers, an idea that was mentioned during the December 3 HCAG call, was endorsed again during this call.

Discussion of research on existing resources to help providers ask about sexual health

Next, Alyson quickly reviewed an overview document that summarized the process used to find resources to help providers ask sexual health questions and analyze their content, and presented key

findings from the analysis. The group then reviewed a mock-up document that compiled questions commonly found in existing sexual history-taking resources. It presented 3 initial questions providers would ask each patient with follow-up questions the providers may ask to get more information. Separate questions were presented for adolescents.

The three questions for adolescents, as originally proposed, were:

1. “Do you have any questions or concerns about your sexual development?”
2. “Are you attracted to guys, girls, or both?”
3. “Have you had sex?” or “Are you sexually active?”

The group discussed these questions at length and recommended various wording changes to better align with how teens speak and what terms they understand, such as using “puberty” or “your body” instead of “sexual development.” Alyson will talk offline with Alfonso Carlon, Donna Futterman, and Arik Marcell to come to agreement on the preferred phrasing of the questions.

There was also a discussion about the pros and cons of incorporating a question pertaining to spirituality, as Chris Thrasher noted that there is often a spiritual aspect to sexual behavior for many African American teens. This led to a broader discussion about the need for contextual information in the mock-up and recognition that providers need to tailor questions for their particular patient. There was agreement that the initial 3 screening questions should be generalizable and there should also be information on tailoring questions to make them culturally relevant.

The three questions, as originally proposed, for adults were:

1. “Have you been sexually active in the last year?”
2. “Do you have sex with men only, women only, or both?”
3. “In the past 12 months (or possibly 6 months), how many people have you had sex with?” (the provider would ask this question twice if the patient answered “both” to the previous question).

Overall, the HCAG thought the three proposed questions for adults were fine. There was some discussion about whether a year was the correct timeframe to use, but the HCAG ultimately decided that 12 months was a standard timeframe often used when taking an adult’s sexual history.

Susan Gilbert wondered why it isn’t recommended that providers initially ask about unprotected sex, a question supported by Alfonso Carlon. There was discussion that the initial screening questions are intended to give the provider an idea of a patient’s sexual risk and the issue of using protection is asked in the subsequent follow-up questions.

This led to a review of the proposed follow-up questions, which addressed the remaining 4Ps (Practices, Past history of STIs, Protection, and Pregnancy prevention/Pregnancy plans). The questions were displayed in a table with columns for MSM, WSW, MSW only and WSM only, and Transgender. Michael Horberg noted that we need to include bisexuals. Overall, the questions are nearly identical regardless of the category. We will also need to work on developing appropriate questions for transgender patients.

Next steps

Alyson will continue to work on the “top 3 questions” document to add in brief provider scripts and more language to provide context. She will pull together the HCAG members that work with teens to finalize the initial three questions for adolescents, and will also send out the table of follow-up questions in Excel so HCAG members can freely edit. During the next HCAG call, we will review the continued work on the top 3 questions document and present draft standard responses to the questions found in Take Charge of Your Sexual Health.

Communications Action Group update

Susan Gilbert provided an update on CAG activities. Currently, the CAG is launching a national media initiative to promote the new patient guide/website and to encourage uptake of recommended sexual health services. The story will be pitched to media nationwide through a pitch letter, targeted phone calls, and a press release. In addition, six spokespeople have been recruited and briefed, and will be pitched for media interviews. In conjunction with Ogilvy Public Relations, the CAG has created a media message box about the importance of sexual health. This message box provides talking points for NCSH members to use during media outreach/interviews. The CAG is currently creating supporting proof points for these overall messages.

NCSH update

Alana Ward mentioned that the Partnership staff is working with an evaluator, Karen Horsch. Karen listened into this call to get a sense of the group and will also be joining future calls until the evaluation is complete. Alana is also working on determining a date(s) for the annual NCSH meeting, which will be held in September in Washington, DC.