

## Randomized community-level HIV prevention intervention trial for men who drink in South African alcohol-serving venues

Seth C. Kalichman, Leickness C. Simbayi, Demetria Cain, Kate B. Carey, Michael P. Carey, Lisa Eaton, Ofer Harel, Vuyelwa Mehlomakhulu and Kelvin Mwaba

### Background:

South African alcohol-serving establishments (i.e., shebeens) offer unique opportunities to reduce HIV risks among men who drink. Purpose: To test an individual- and a social structural-level HIV prevention intervention for men who drink in shebeens. Methods: Twelve matched pairs of township neighbourhoods were randomized to receive either (i) an HIV prevention intervention (guided by Social Action Theory) to reduce sexual risk and increase risk reduction communication in social networks, or (ii) an attention-matched control intervention that focused on the prevention of relationship violence. At the individual level, the interventions delivered skills building workshops focused on sexual risk reduction. At the social structural level, the intervention aimed to increase conversations about safer sex among men in the shebeens, distributed small media and implemented community educational events. Individual-level outcomes were assessed by following the workshop cohorts for 1 year (N = 984), and community-level outcomes were examined through cross-sectional community surveys conducted for 1 year in the shebeens (N = 9,678). Results: Men in the HIV prevention workshops demonstrated greater condom use, more HIV prevention-oriented conversations and greater perceptions of safer sex norms than men in the comparison workshops. Changes at the community level demonstrated significant differences in condom use, although the pattern was not consistent over time. Conclusions: Multi-level interventions that target men who drink in South African shebeens may help reduce risks for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

### Introduction

Southern Africa is home to two-thirds of people living with HIV in the world.<sup>1</sup> In South Africa, men who drink alcohol are at particularly high risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).<sup>2-4</sup> Informal drinking venues (i.e., shebeens) located in urban townships fuel the generalized HIV epidemic in South Africa by serving as an intersection between high-risk sexual networks and the general population.<sup>4</sup> The majority of men who drink alcohol in shebeens also meet sex partners in these venues.<sup>5,6</sup> Meeting sex partners in shebeens is associated with higher rates of unprotected sexual behaviours and less frequent condom use.<sup>3,7</sup> Sexual risks for HIV transmission are amplified by alcohol use and can be facilitated by the social



































- 35 Fritz K, Morojele N, Kalichman S. Alcohol: the forgotten drug in HIV/AIDS. *Lancet* 2010;376:398–400.
- 36 Latkin CA, Knowlton AR. Micro-social structural approaches to HIV prevention: a social ecological perspective. *AIDS Care* 2005;17(Suppl 1):S102–13.