

HIV vaccine knowledge and beliefs among communities at elevated risk: conspiracies, questions and confusion.

Roberts KJ, Newman PA, Duan N, Rudy ET.

HIV vaccines offer the best long-term hope of controlling the AIDS pandemic. We explored HIV vaccine knowledge and beliefs among communities at elevated risk for HIV/AIDS. Participants (N=99; median age=33 years; 48% female; 22% African-American; 44% Latino; 28% white; 6% other) were recruited from seven high-risk venues in Los Angeles, California, using purposive, venue-based sampling. Results from nine focus groups revealed: 1) mixed beliefs and conspiracy theories about the existence of HIV vaccines; 2) hopefulness and doubts about future HIV vaccine availability; 3) lack of information about HIV vaccines; and 4) confusion about vaccines and how they work. Tailored HIV vaccine education that addresses the current status of HIV vaccine development and key vaccine concepts is warranted among communities at risk. Ongoing dialogue among researchers, public health practitioners and communities at risk may provide a vital opportunity to dispel misinformation and rumors and to cultivate trust, which may facilitate HIV vaccine trial participation and uptake of future HIV vaccines.