Intimate Partner Violence: Drug Use and HIV Risk Among Women in Hartford

Merrill Singer, PhD
Hispanic Health Council
Substance Abuse, Violence & AIDS

- Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, RO1 DA13140, PI: Merrill Singer

- Other Project Team members: Michael Duke, Lucy Rohena, Judi Murphy, Jennie Wakefield, Hassan Salaheen, Jim Vivian

- Conducted by the Hispanic Health Council
Hispanic Health Council (HHC)

- Founded in 1978 through a collaborative partnership of:
  1) applied anthropologists with a “advocacy-action” model; and
  2) community health activists from the Puerto Rican community of Hartford

- Designed to address pressing public health issues - poor health and poor health access – among the poor and underserved
Research at the HHC

- Research has been central to the Hispanic Health Council mission since its founding in 1978.
- The HHC conducts research on many aspects of health in low-income communities of Hartford and beyond, including internationally.
- Findings are used in program development, advocacy for policy changes, staff training, and community education.
- Drug use and its health and social consequences have been a key topic of HHC research since the 1980s.
Aims of the SAVA study (2000-2004): To examine the relationship among substance abuse, violence and AIDS among not-in-treatment drug using women
Criteria for participation

- Female, out-of-treatment drug user (most prior studies with in-treatment women)
- Age 18 or over
- Lives in Hartford
- Used heroin, cocaine, or cocaine derivatives during the past 30 days
- N= 500 drug involved women
Participants were recruited through street out reach
Measurement

- Participants were all interviewed in the language of their choice (English, Spanish) with a unified instrument referred to as the Drug Use and Partner Violence Interview.
- In addition to sociodemographic data (primary language, age, ethnicity, education, marital status, work status, living situation), the interview comprised a battery of items that served as the basis for our primary independent (IPV, CSA, partner drug use) and dependent (health status, sexual risk behavior and drug use) measures.
Ethnicity

- Puerto Rican: 37.4%
- African Amer: 40.9%
- Other Non-His: 4.0%
- White: 14.9%
- Other His: 2.3%

*Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding*

The Sample
Participant Age*

* Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding
Characteristics

- Homeless = 45.1%
- Unemployed = 86%
- 2/3 report current/most recent partner is/was an active drug user
- Most frequently used drugs/last 30 days
  - Alcohol - 65.8%
  - Marijuana - 43.6%
  - Crack - 68.6%
  - Heroin - 63%
  - Injected in last 30 days - 38.4%
“He had a daughter that was like seventeen at the time. Well ... she would come by, sit with me... He came in one day, I was in the kitchen. I think I was making spaghetti... He came in and said, “What you making my daughter cry for?” I said, “What?” “She sitting up there crying,” and the man hit me so hard, I fell onto the stove, luckily I missed that spot where the spaghetti was... Yeah you know it was always, oh baby I am sorry, but he had beat me so bad, that I couldn’t go out the house and if anybody came in I would get in the bed with my head underneath the sheets, I don’t want nobody to see me ...”
Terms & Concepts

● “Partner violence” is conceptualized in 3 ways:
  a) a history of “extreme” partner violence
  b) the number of abusive relationships reported, and
  c) the overall frequency (thus intensity) of partner violence.

● History of childhood sexual abuse (i.e. before age 18) was also included in analyses

● “Extreme” partner violence includes having been beaten up, threatened with a gun or knife, or shot/stabbed by a partner
Extent of abuse

- 86% reported a history of intimate partner verbal abuse
- 77% report history of some sort of intimate partner physical abuse
- 55% report history of “extreme” physical abuse of the kind mentioned
- In short, violence, including extreme violence, is very widespread in this population.
History of Physical Partner Violence Victimization

# Lifetime History of Partner Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of violence</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Accuse you of something you didn't do to cause problems?</td>
<td>340 (72.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bring up something from the past to hurt you?</td>
<td>339 (72.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Insult or swear at you?</td>
<td>372 (79.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Throw, smash, hit, or kick something?</td>
<td>282 (60.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Threaten to hit or throw something at you?</td>
<td>307 (65.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Throw something at you?</td>
<td>270 (57.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Push, grab or shove you?</td>
<td>334 (71.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Slap you?</td>
<td>294 (62.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Kick, bite, or hit you with a fist?</td>
<td>260 (55.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Hit or try to hit you with something?</td>
<td>251 (53.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Beat you up?</td>
<td>237 (50.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Threaten you with a gun or knife?</td>
<td>134 (28.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Shoot or stab you?</td>
<td>47 (10.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Lifetime History of Partner Violence

### Types of violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of violence</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Accuse you of something you didn't do to cause problems?</td>
<td>340 (72.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bring up something from the past to hurt you?</td>
<td>339 (72.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Insult or swear at you?</td>
<td>372 (79.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Throw, smash, hit, or kick something?</td>
<td>282 (60.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Threaten to hit or throw something at you?</td>
<td>307 (65.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Throw something at you?</td>
<td>270 (57.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Push, grab or shove you?</td>
<td>334 (71.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Slap you?</td>
<td>294 (62.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Kick, bite, or hit you with a fist?</td>
<td>260 (55.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Hit or try to hit you with something?</td>
<td>251 (53.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Beat you up?</td>
<td>237 (50.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Threaten you with a gun or knife?</td>
<td>134 (28.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Shoot or stab you?</td>
<td>47 (10.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Physical Violence**
## Lifetime History of Partner Violence

### Types of violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violence</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Accuse you of something you didn't do to cause problems?</td>
<td>340 (72.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Bring up something from the past to hurt you?</td>
<td>339 (72.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Insult or swear at you?</td>
<td>372 (79.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Throw, smash, hit, or kick something?</td>
<td>282 (60.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Threaten to hit or throw something at you?</td>
<td>307 (65.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Throw something at you?</td>
<td>270 (57.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Push, grab or shove you?</td>
<td>334 (71.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Slap you?</td>
<td>294 (62.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Kick, bite, or hit you with a fist?</td>
<td>260 (55.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Hit or try to hit you with something?</td>
<td>251 (53.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Beat you up?</td>
<td>237 (50.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Threaten you with a gun or knife?</td>
<td>134 (28.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Shoot or stab you?</td>
<td>47 (10.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Physical Violence**

**Extreme Physical Violence**
Has Anyone (Including a Relative) Ever Forced You to Have Sex With Them? (N=297)

- No Phys Viol: 35.7%*
- L Extreme PV: 40.4%**
- L Phys Viol: 37.3%**

Age of First Occurrence (n=149)
- Mean: 13.9
- Median: 12.0
- Mode: 9.0

** <0.01
“But I have always been abused since I was a little girl, always, always. I came to this world just to suffer, that’s why I think I do drugs...These relationships that I be having, they are not supposed to be, I don’t know, like animals. Like if I was a little animal and they had me ‘do what I say or I will beat you!’”

Participant
Age of First Drink & First Drug Use (N=298)

- No L Phys Viol: 1st Drug Use 16.8, 1st Drink 15.9
- L Extreme PV: 1st Drug Use 15.3, 1st Drink 14.5
- L Phys Viol: 1st Drug Use 15.7, 1st Drink 15
Usual & Largest # of Drinks per Sitting in Last 30 Days (n=452)

- L Phys Viol: 24.0**
- L Extreme PV: 30.4**
- No L Phys Viol: 17.8

** <0.01
Average # of Injections in Last 30 Days (n=162)

- L Phys Viol: 137
- L Extreme PV: 98
- No Phys Viol: 148
Have You Ever Split Drugs With This Partner? (N=298)

- Phys Viol**: 73.7%
- Extreme PV: 70.0%
- No Phys Viol: 59.0%

** < 0.01
When You Split Drugs, Who Usually Gets More? (n=186)

**Partner**

- Phys Viol**: 37.8%
- Extreme PV**: 42.4%
- No Phys Viol: 43.6%

**Participant**

- Phys Viol**: 29.1%
- Extreme PV**: 28.8%
- No Phys Viol: 28.1%

**Share Equally**

- Phys Viol**: 26.4%

** < 0.01
Average Frequency of Conflicts Over Splitting Drugs With Partner:
1=Never, 5=Very Often (n=288)

**No Phys Viol**: 1.93

**Extreme PV****: 3.16

**Phys Viol****: 2.91

**<0.01**
Partner Accused You of Not Giving Him/Her Fair Share of Drugs (n=304)

** <0.01
Partner Ever Blamed You For Taking His/Her Drugs Without Asking Him/Her (N=303)

** <0.01
Ever Sell Sex/Drugs to Get Drugs for Partner (n=298)

** < 0.01
Q: So, he wants you to go tricking for drugs, but he doesn’t want you to look at other men?

A: Every time I used to finish the tricking he used to beat the shit out of me for doing the tricking. After he did the drugs or whatever he had to do with me, and he used to beat the shit out of me. And I was like, “You are the one that is sending me!”
Associations with extreme partner violence

- HIV
- Hep B
- Overdose
- Multiple sexual partners (i.e., more than 1 in past 30 days)
- Commercial sex
- Recent heroin use
Associations with childhood sexual abuse

- Hepatitis C
- STDs
- History of drug overdose

Women who were sexually abused prior to age 18 are approximately twice as likely to suffer these health consequences than women who have been spared this particular form of victimization.
Conclusions

- Exposure to domestic violence (intimate partner violence, especially extreme violence, & childhood sexual abuse) significantly enhances the drug-related health risks, including HIV and other infections, of drug-involved women.
- There is a critical need for gender-appropriate drug treatment that is responsive to the health needs, as well as social roles of women, including their likely exposure as adults and as children to significant levels of violence.
- Violence, drug abuse, AIDS and a range of other diseases constitute mutually reinforcing, regularly co-occurring disease, a condition we have terms a *syndemic*. 
the end