

Researcher

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Conditional Cash Transfers and HIV Prevention

The study will examine the effect of an innovative, multilevel HIV prevention intervention that will jointly address both structural and social factors contributing to young women's increased vulnerability to HIV. My goal is to determine whether providing cash transfers to poor young women and their households—conditional on school attendance—reduces young women's HIV risk, and whether combining the cash transfer program with a community mobilization program focused on young men further reduces that risk.

The objective of the cash transfer intervention is to reduce structural barriers to education and increase the school attendance of young women, thereby decreasing their HIV risk. Mobilization activities aim to educate young men about gender norms, intimate partner violence, and HIV risk; and to encourage them to protect young women and reduce HIV risk in their communities. The study design involves individually randomizing the households of young women to receive a monthly cash transfer, conditional on the young women attending school. I will also randomize half of the villages (n=12) where the young women reside, to receive a community mobilization intervention with a particular focus on changing gender norms in young men.

Countries where the research will take place

Agincourt subdistrict of Bushbuckridge, rural Mpumalanga province, South Africa

How does the research describe the impact of population/reproductive health on poverty reduction and/or economic growth?

I will examine whether young South African women whose households are randomized to receive cash transfers conditional on school attendance report fewer unprotected sex acts and are less likely to acquire HIV over time, compared to young women whose households were not randomized to

receive cash transfers. I also look at effects of the intervention on the educational attainment and employment outcomes of young women.

How will the research address a policy need, and what kind of policy lesson is expected?

There is growing policy attention on the potential role of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in reducing HIV incidence in eastern and southern Africa. However, there have been very few studies that have rigorously evaluated CCTs for HIV prevention. This study will provide valuable evidence on whether investing in CCTs can help reduce the number of new HIV infections in high-prevalence settings.

Methods used

Randomized controlled trial

Data used

Primary data collection

Research results

The study will begin January 2011.

Research products

The study is now part of the HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN).