By Any Peer Necessary

Second-generation prevention does the trick

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Peer education programs can help reduce unprotected anal intercourse among young gay men, reveals a report by University of California/San Francisco (UCSF) researchers in the August *American Journal of Public Health.*

Studies show an alarming rise in HIV infections among gay men, especially among those in their twenties and younger. One San Francisco survey found transmission rates from 9 percent to 18 percent. According to various research, 33 percent to 43 percent of young gay men reported having intercourse without a condom in the past two to six months.

In an effort to reverse these trends, peer prevention programs have sprung up in many cities, as HIV negative men probe issues such as survivor guilt, multiple loss and the “AIDSification” of homosexuality. Few such programs have been studied systematically, so UCSF sponsored the “Empowerment Project” in Eugene, Oregon, where prevention education was comprised exclusively of peer-led social activities and discussion groups. In a year’s time, the rates of unprotected anal intercourse among participants dropped from 41 percent to 30 percent.

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