

Fostering Resilience to Psychosocial and HIV Risk in Indian Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)

There are large numbers of men who have sex with men (MSM) in India who face various psychosocial challenges as well as risk for getting or transmitting HIV. While condom distribution and education about HIV can help with HIV prevention, MSM in India may benefit from an intervention that involves counseling to help with different psychosocial challenges or mental health concerns.

This study is the next step of ongoing community-based research collaboration between investigators from the United States (funded through the National Institute of Mental Health), investigators from the India Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT) and two NGOs dedicated to HIV prevention among MSM -- Sahodaran (Chennai) and The Humsafar Trust (Mumbai).

This is a randomized controlled trial, comparing two different approaches to HIV prevention among MSM. Accordingly, 608 MSM in Chennai and Mumbai will be receive either:

- 1) Testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (and linkage to treatment for any positive tests), and related counseling. This group is called HIV/STI VCT.
- 2) HIV/STI VCT and additional counseling. This involves 4 group counseling sessions and 6 individual counseling sessions focused on participant needs.

All participants will be followed for one year, with STI incidence and HIV risk behavior as primary outcomes and psychosocial mediators secondary. Cost effectiveness of the intervention will be calculated compared to HIV/STI VCT alone, considering individual and public health benefits as well as downstream cost-savings due to infections averted.