

The Ontario Women's Study.

What Ontario Women Have to Say about HIV Prevention: Implications for Policy and Program Development

Funding: Ontario HIV Treatment Network

The **Ontario Women's Study (OWS)** is a community-based research initiative exploring HIV prevention among diverse groups of women living in the province. The OWS was initiated by community service providers, community members and researchers who recognized the lack of research that asks women to describe their HIV prevention needs. To this end, the **OWS** focuses on the diversity of women's lived experiences among different populations of women. The engagement of community members and decision makers throughout the research process will drive the development of policies and programs to stem the tide of new HIV infections among women in Ontario.

Objectives

Between 2010 and 2012, the **Ontario Women's Study** will:

- Document women's understanding of HIV acquisition and the social, structural, racial, gender-based and economic factors that influence women's individual HIV-related risk behaviours;
- Determine promising practices for reducing HIV among different populations of women living in Ontario; and,
- Transfer this knowledge to decision makers at all levels of government to drive enhanced HIV prevention policies and programming for women in Ontario and Canada.

Methods

Currently, with the support of peer researchers, the OWS is conducting a series of focus groups which will drive the construction of a pilot quantitative survey. This mixed method approach will help us document women's understanding of HIV acquisition and the social, structural, racial, gender-based and economic factors that influence their HIV transmission risk. Based on a series of meetings, the OWS determined that focus group participants would include women that are often underrepresented in research (i.e., women not recognized in epidemiological data).

One focus group will include a diverse sample of women living with HIV/AIDS, whereas the remaining focus groups will be comprised of women without a known HIV diagnosis including:

- women in prison;
- women who have been released from prison in the last 12 months;
- trans women;
- immigrant, refugee, non-status, newcomer and transient women;
- East Asian and South East Asian women;
- South Asian women;
- Latina women;
- second generation African, Caribbean and Black women;
- rural and remote women in Northern and Southern Ontario;
- homeless and unstably housed women;
- women who work in indoor sex industry locations;
- young women who use party/recreational drugs;
- queer women from African, Caribbean and Black communities;
- Aboriginal women; and
- young women who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

More info

For more information contact:

- Dr. Lynne Leonard, Principal Investigator, at 613-562-5800 ext. 8286 or leonard@uottawa.ca

Dissemination

Lynne Leonard¹, Mona Loutfy², Margaret Millson³, Lea Narciso¹, Robert Remis³, Janet Rowe⁴, Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp⁵ & Wangari Tharao⁶ (2011). *The Ontario Women's Study: Collaborating with an Expert Working Group to Explore the HIV Prevention Needs of Diverse Groups of Women*. 20th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, Toronto, Ontario, April 14-17.

Abstract published in: [Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases & Medical Microbiology](#) (2011), Vol 22, Suppl B

Lynne Leonard¹ (2010). *The Ontario Women's Study*. Women and HIV/AIDS Knowledge Sharing and Networking Forum. AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Toronto, Ontario, May 10-11. **(Plenary Address)**

Lynne Leonard¹, Emily Medd¹, Sue McWilliam¹, Janet Rowe⁴, Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp⁵ & Danielle Layman-Pleet⁷ (2007). *Considering "Women" as a Discrete Group May Hinder HIV Prevention Programming*. 16th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, Toronto, Ontario, April 26-29.

Abstract published in: [Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases & Medical Microbiology](#) (2007), Vol 18, Suppl B.

In developing the OWS, the team produced a series of Women and HIV Fact Sheets which may be accessed here:

[Aboriginal Women](#)

[African and Caribbean Women](#)

[Asian and South Asian Women](#)

[Women Involved in the Sex Trade](#)

[Street Involved Women](#)

[Transgendered Women](#)

[Women in Prison](#)

[Women who Use Drugs](#)

[Young Women](#)

Since project implementation, a series of OWS bulletins have been developed and may be accessed here:

[OWS Bulletin – January 2011](#)

[OWS Bulletin – February 2011](#)

[OWS Bulletin – March 2011](#)

[OWS Bulletin – April 2011](#)

[OWS Bulletin – May 2011](#)

[OWS Bulletin – Summer 2011](#)

¹HIV and Hepatitis C Prevention Team, Department of Epidemiology and Community Medicine, University of Ottawa; ² Women's College Research Institute, Toronto, Ontario; ³ The Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto; ⁴ The 519 Church Street Community Centre, Toronto, Ontario; ⁵Asian Community AIDS Services, Toronto, Ontario; ⁶ Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre, Toronto, Ontario; ⁷ Voices of Positive Women, Toronto, Ontario.