

UNC Center for AIDS Research Newsletter

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



The mission of the UNC CFAR is to provide a multidisciplinary environment that promotes basic, clinical, behavioral and translational research in the prevention, detection and treatment of HIV infection.

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The “Sex-Ed Squad” – Teaching Teens Through Theatre

Happy Springtime! The sun is finally shining and we are strapping on our sandals and heading out into the streets to promote safe sex and HIV awareness around the Triangle! This month’s edition of the CFAR newsletter includes some inspiring projects from some of our young CFAR researchers and assistants. Let us know if you are working on something HIV/AIDS related this summer – we would love to include your efforts in our upcoming editions.

This month, we attended a rehearsal for the UNC Sex Ed Squad and chatted with the project coordinator, Arianna Taboada. Taboada is a member of the UNC CFAR Community Advisory Board and an alumna of the UNC School of Social Work and the Gillings School of Global Public Health.

The UNC Sex Ed Squad is part of a 3 site project that is piloting the AMP! intervention in 3 school district sites - Chapel Hill/Carrboro, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. AMP! is a theater-based HIV prevention and sexual health education intervention that was developed at the UCLA Art & Global Health Center in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District HIV/AIDS Prevention Unit.



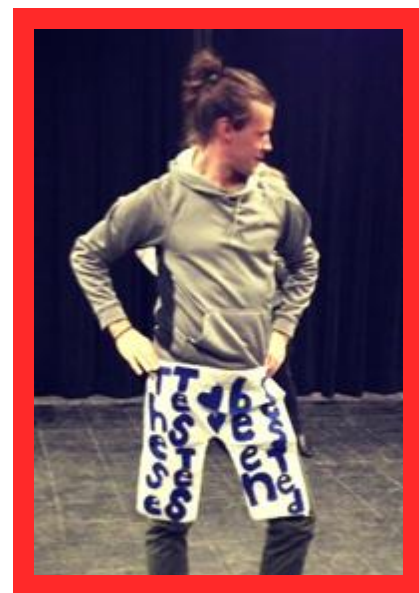
A simulated high school sex education class, informed by real-life experiences by the actors.

Taboada explained that the Center's mission is “to harness the communicative power of the arts to intervene in public health issues, and we recognize the need to collaborate across disciplines and silos”. The UCLA Squad members have been working in Los Angeles public schools since 2009, and during the 2012-13 school year, the AMP! program is being implemented in both the Atlanta and Chapel Hill/Carrboro city schools. Thanks to the support of a Ueltschi course development grant, the UNC Sex Ed Squad was developed as a course within the Communication Studies Department. The spirited students started this course with training in HIV basics, health education, and interactive theater, and they work to create and deliver components of the AMP! intervention. Taboada explained that “the Center (at UCLA) received private funding that has supported this programmatic expansion, and one of the most exciting elements is to see the Squads communicating across the country and sharing the experience of reaching audiences in their local communities”.

AMP! uses a “neer peer” model, which Taboada explained as “college students sharing their sexual health experiences with high school students, and engaging in interactive theater and dramatized discussions to deliver accurate information”. This model “facilitates the exchange of accurate information between neer peers”, a method of sharing that high school students seem to find more appealing than hearing the information from teachers or other adults.

Taboada is uniquely qualified to lead this project because her background bridges the worlds of art and health. She attended UCLA as an undergraduate, and the Art & Global Health Center provided mentorship and hands on experience, as well as academic training, in how to bridge those worlds. She continued her graduate studies at UNC and

was given the tools to be “fluent in how public health practitioners and researchers think of interventions”. She says she is “a firm believer in bringing artists to the table as full partners in designing innovative curriculum and programs”.



The safe sex fashion show, including shorts that read “These testes been tested!”

The CFAR is supporting the evaluation of AMP! in North Carolina with a Developmental Award (PI Alexandra Lightfoot, EdD). Taboada says “these funds are allowing us to collect and analyze data from the college students and the high school students they will be engaging with, as well as conduct qualitative interviews with high school health teachers and other stakeholders such as school district level officials”.

This first year at UNC, they are focused on implementing the pilot program, with the aim “to evaluate its feasibility and efficacy in a NC school district”. (Continued on page 2)



The UNC Sex-Ed squad sings in the “bodily fluids chorus”, sharing the fluids that can transmit the HIV virus.

Taboada explained that “part of our evaluation plan includes looking at the key relationships built with the school’s district and teachers, conducting interviews with stakeholders, and assessing the possibilities for further expansion of AMP! into other districts where youth are just as, if not more, vulnerable”. Her goal is to gather “a strong pool of evidence for what direction AMP! should take” so that UNC can become a permanent home for the Sex-Ed Squad. She expects to have a full report by the summer to examine both process and outcome data for this pilot year. Several graduate students from the Health Behavior department are helping with instrument design and data collection, and the CFAR Social/Behavioral Sciences Core has offered support as well.

Taboada explained that working with college students has been the most rewarding part of the project for her personally. She describes them as “motivated, dedicated, and overall an awesome group” that meets each Friday and shares lots of laughs and personal information with each other. She has been “pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm from the school district and health teachers”. School representatives have taken the time to meet with the students, come to rehearsal, and helped to plan out the details of the school visits. What amazing teamwork!

“Knowledge is powerful and so is sex...so I want to be knowledgeable about sex.” – UNC Sex-Ed Squad Skit

So how can you help support this project? Taboada is interested in connecting with researchers in the field who have a special interest in youth and/or prevention work, especially in partnership with school systems.

She wants to continue promoting “an interdisciplinary approach and loop in folks from the arts and education” with science and research professionals. Email Arianna at ataboada@arts.ucla.edu to learn more.

NEW MEDIA NEWS



Join our Facebook community to learn more about HIV-related news and events in the triangle:
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Free videos from the UNC campus-wide course on HIV/AIDS for you! Watch them at:
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CAMPUS UPDATE from Jesse Goldberg, CFAR Staffperson

The Valentines Day Safe Sex goody bag event was held on February 14, 2013. This event brought together a collaborative team of people from CFAR's CODE Office, Carolina Health Education Counselors of Sexuality (CHECS), and Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA).

They distributed over 200 bags containing various pieces of candy, 1 latex condom, 1 regular lubricant packet, 1 flavored lubricant packet, and usage guidance. Fifteen additional bags were made with a non-latex condom although no students requested these.

The event took place in 3 high traffic areas on UNC's campus (The Pit, Polk Place Quad, and The Student Union) with Jesse and a member of SAGA handing out the gift bags. Originally, the event was publicized on social media sites as taking place from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm, but so many students were interested in the safe sex bags that all bags were handed out by 11:00 am. Students were instantly intrigued and responded when it was announced that the pink goody bags contained safe sex items.

CHECS members agreed the event was a great success and plans are being made to make this event an annual occurrence on Valentines Day and possibly other holidays - with a greater number of bags available to hand out in the future.