RAMP Project Abstract: NEW YORK, US

Project Title: Sexual health satisfaction and risk perception regarding HIV and STI acquisition among people with and without post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC) in predominantly Black and Latino communities

Project Type: Short-term Project 8-10 weeks On-site

Proposed Project Dates: Flexible 8 -10 weeks On-site between June 2023 – September 2023

Project Site: New York Blood Center, New York

Project Overview:

As part of your work with the Columbia Research Unit, you will collaborate with an interdisciplinary team of clinical research investigators on a project regarding sexual health in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The goal of the project is to understand satisfaction regarding sexual health and attitudes toward STI and HIV acquisition risk among predominantly Black and/or Latino community members affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project specifically seeks to understand potential associations between Covid-19 and post-acute sequelae of Covid-19 (PASC; also known as "long Covid") with sexual health satisfaction and STI/HIV risk perception. As a member of the research team, you will spend 8-10 weeks learning how to recruit, consent, and enroll community members into a survey-based cross-sectional study. You will learn how to review study data and work with the clinical research team, epidemiologists, and statisticians to analyze data and complete a manuscript to describe study findings.

This project involves working onsite at our research unit in New York City. If COVID-19 restricts travel, the project can be done remotely with secured access to electronic health records and other media for communication. Specific responsibilities may change (for example, focus on literature reviews, chart review and development of recruitment/educational materials related to HIV/COVID and sexual health, and on-line or phone recruitment/screening for this study as well as HIV vaccine studies).

Project Summary:
This project aims to understand community members' attitudes toward sexual health and risk of STI/HIV acquisition in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and PASC. The catchment community and patient population accessing CUIMC is comprised of predominantly Black and Latino patients, who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will enroll community members in a cross-sectional study using online surveys. Participants will complete online surveys regarding demographic information, social determinants of health, history of Covid-19 infection, history of Covid-19 vaccination, post-Covid symptoms, and sexual health questions.

Study hypotheses and objectives include:

Hypothesis 1: COVID-19 sequelae are associated with lower sexual health satisfaction. The association between COVID-19 sequelae and sexual health satisfaction may be further affected by social determinants of health such as race/ethnicity and other demographic factors at the individual, household, or community level.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals with past COVID-19 infection and concurrent PASC will have different risk perceptions towards STI and HIV acquisition compared with those who have fully recovered from COVID-19 or never been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Objective 1: Use quantitative survey data to assess sexual health satisfaction reported on the electronic questionnaire conducted at 9-18 months after infection. Sequelae from the electronic questionnaire will be defined several ways; 1) as a binary variable (yes/no), 2) as a linear variable measuring severity of symptoms, and 3) >2 symptoms self-reported.
Objective 2: Use quantitative survey data to assess risk perceptions regarding HIV and STI acquisition stratified by presence or absence of PASC.

Regulatory requirements for the project and plans for completing them:

This project has been approved by the Columbia University Irving Medical Center Institutional Review Board. RAMP Scholar will need to complete CITI and other required IRB trainings to be added to the IRB protocol. We will assist in completing all the necessary modules, and IRB modifications to add personnel are approved quickly.

All participants will be assigned a PID, and data will be collected using the PID. Data will be coded using the PID. A linkage file that matches the name and PID will be created; it will be a password-protected file accessible only to research staff. It will be maintained separately from other study related materials. This file will be accessible only to research staff. Access to this data will be limited to only study personnel who have a need for this information. All electronic data will be maintained only with PIDs within a university server on password-protected computers, certified encrypted endpoint, and REDCAP.

Expected Deliverables:

1. HVTN – presentation
2. Manuscript for submission

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