

Flashblood: blood sharing among female injecting drug users in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Aims This study examined the association between the blood-sharing practice of ‘flashblood’ use and demographic factors, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) status and variables associated with risky sex and drug behaviors among female injecting drug users. Flash blood is a syringe-full of blood passed from someone who has just injected heroin to someone else who injects it in lieu of heroin. **Design** A cross-sectional study. **Setting** Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. **Participants** One hundred and sixty-nine female injecting drug users (IDUs) were recruited using purposive sampling for hard-to-reach populations. **Measurements** The association between flash blood use, demographic and personal characteristics and risky sex and drug use variables was analyzed by *t*-test and χ^2 test. The association between flash blood use and residential neighborhood was mapped. **Findings** Flashblood users were more likely to: be married ($P = 0.05$), have lived in the current housing situation for a shorter time ($P < 0.000$), have been forced as a child to have sex by a family member ($P = 0.007$), inject heroin more in the last 30 days ($P = 0.005$), smoke marijuana at an earlier age ($P = 0.04$), use contaminated rinse-water ($P < 0.03$), pool money for drugs ($P < 0.03$) and share drugs ($P = 0.000$). Non-flashblood users were more likely to live with their parents ($P = 0.003$). Neighborhood flash blood use was highest near downtown and in the next two adjoining suburbs and lowest in the most distant suburbs. **Conclusions** These data indicate that more vulnerable women who are heavy users and living in shorter-term housing are injecting flashblood. The practice of flashblood appears to be spreading from the inner city to the suburbs.

Keywords Africa, HIV/AIDS, risk behavior, substance use, women.

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