

Report on: Hashtag HIV? Using Digital Epidemiology to advance HIV prevention among youth

Speaker: Dr. Robin Stevens

With HIV on the rise, the public health is in serious outlook. Dr. Stevens very effectively discusses her ongoing research on the sexual risk behavior online as well as offline among African American and Latino youth.

The talk about this study was very empowering and informative. She kept the talk very interactive and was able to get her point across very efficiently. She introduced different topics like digital epidemiology and how it is a very valuable tool for HIV prevention and public health. The main 6 sub topics for the day were: Life in a digital neighborhood, imagined visibility, risk and prevention messages, methodology challenges, context-culture-collabos-credibility and lastly, ripe for the intervention.

In today's time, almost 89% of the youth uses social media, even though 30 % lives in poverty. The digital neighborhood includes online relationships, popular cultures, modelling behaviors, third spaces like mall, movie hall, activism etc. With rise in youth using social media, it can act as a tool to prevention and awareness as well as peer pressure. Dr Robin very clearly explained and gave ample examples for the former case. But she failed to mention the aspects of the latter.

Her study had 4 major sections being: sex, drugs and violence on social media; substance and mental health on twitter; effective HIV messages on Social media; using social media to increase prevention. She researched in these sections of the media to draw conclusions on her study. Her study volunteers included different areas of people, as in today's time the social media we get suggested information basis on our searches and people of similar age groups have a higher probability of having the data being shown similarly.

Thus it is very imperative that the study people are of the similar youth age group and not older people. Although the developers for the study have to mid ages and not extremely young but should clearly understand the aspects of the study and what the outcomes are to be.

Dr Robin made a powerful case in depicting her study with the help of tables. She shortlisted the most searched words and filtered the data on the basis of the words and also had to use natural language processing in order to get the most relevant data out of it. It clearly stated that there were more than 14000 tweets with similar words and thus showing how the impact of HIV or drugs is on people.

Although Dr robin showed many tables, but it was a very cumbersome to understand everything in just 1 hour. I am very sure that they have researched thoroughly and handling such heavy data is not an easy task, but their team made no efforts in providing light on this and creating more awareness about it. My point being that, when they are searching over such huge amount of data, they could have also created awareness about the HIV and methods of preventions for it. As their study researchers are of the same age groups so I feel that if they made an effort to put their point on how preventions can be made, how people can be made aware of what all is

happening around the world and thus making people comfortable that they are not alone in this. With so much of data I am very sure that they could have easily convinced many people their work towards HIV prevention as they had all the facts, as statistical data has always been proven to have more importance.