

# **A STUDY OF HIV PREVALENCE, RISK FACTORS AND KNOWLEDGE IN SIX RURAL MEXICAN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH RATES OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION**

## **Presenter:**

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## *Abstract*

**Background:** Risk for HIV transmission in some male Latino economic migrants in the US is likely to be elevated due to participation in high risk behavior. A study in Durham, NC revealed that 46% of single Hispanic men and 42% of men living apart from their wives had intercourse with sex workers within the last year. Many of these migrants travel regularly back and forth between the US and Mexico. However, little is known about whether HIV is being transmitted to partners in Mexico or what these partners understand about HIV risk.

**Objectives:** We examined the prevalence, risk, and knowledge of HIV in six rural Mexican communities with high rates of back and forth migration.

**Methods:** We collected data at community health screenings offered in six rural communities in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. A convenience sample of 169 participants underwent (1) confidential HIV testing using the Oraquick® Advance™

Rapid HIV-1/2 Antibody Test, (2) a survey assessing HIV risk and sexual relationships with back and forth migrants, and (3) a self-administered knowledge survey of HIV risk and risk reduction. We gave pre- and post-test counseling about HIV risk to all participants.

**Results:** Of the 169 participants, 86 % were women. None were found to be HIV positive. Although very few (3%) of subjects were themselves economic migrants, and the vast majority (89%) reported having only one life-time sexual partner, most (74%) were in sexual relationships with a back and forth migrant. Furthermore, 90% reported using condoms “never” or “almost never” . General knowledge of HIV and risk reduction was very low.

**Conclusions:** While we found no HIV positive individuals in our sample, the potential for HIV transmission in this population is significant. Although the majority of women do not report engaging in behavior that is typically viewed as risky for HIV, the majority were in unprotected sexual relationship with back and forth migrants. Given the high risk sexual behavior documented in male Latino migrants and the low level of HIV knowledge in these communities, these women may be at elevated risk for acquiring HIV from a single high risk sexual partner.