A creative method for designing a comparison group: Reducing cost and controlling confounding factors

Cheng Wang, MA, MS, Michelle A. Doldren, EdD, MPH Deborah A. Mulligan, MD FAAP FACEP Aaron F. Buchbinder, BA, MBS/DO (Candidate)

Institute for Child Health Policy, Nova Southeastern University,
Minerva Bryant, MED, CAP, CMHP
River Region Human Services, Inc., Park Street, Suite 317, Jacksonville, FL 32204.

INTRODUCTION

• SISTER’S RISE is a SAMHSA funded prevention project in Jacksonville, FL

Two evidence-based intervention programs:
  • SISTA focuses on HIV prevention
  • PFL focuses on Substance Abuse prevention

Project Target Population:
  SISTA
    • Black, heterosexual women
    • Ages 19-34 years old
  PFL
    • Black, heterosexual men and women
    • Ages 19-34 years old

METHOD

• The PFL comparison group is selected from the SISTA program participants

• Thus one intervention program serves as the comparison for the other intervention program

• Both Questionnaires—SISTA and PFL— are collected simultaneously from the comparison group
  • Reduce staff time
  • Reduce incentives

• It is important to pair the timing of the intervention group and the comparison group within a close timeframe

• It is also important to have restrictions on the comparison group participants in attending the other intervention (PFL)

DISCUSSION

Design Advantages:

• Takes advantage of program delivery similarities in designing a comparison group
  • Similar in intervention length
  • Match data collection time points
  • Concurrency of intervention and comparison group

• Have environmental factors in control

• Minimize the variation due to random error

• Thorough comparison of knowledge gain & behavior changes over time

• Statistically robust for evaluation

Design Challenges:

• Diligent effort is needed for follow up over time

• Staff needs to keep consistent and clear records

• The tracking process spans over the entire grant period

• The comparison group participants are all women