

# PROJECT nGAGE

## Good Evidence – Medication Adherence

### Evidence-Based for Retention in Care

#### INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

##### Goals of Intervention

- Improve antiretroviral (ART) adherence
- Improve viral load suppression
- Improve retention in care

##### Target Population

- Young black men who have sex with men (YBMSM)

##### Brief Description

*Project nGage* is a social-network, support intervention designed to improve retention in care and antiretroviral (ART) adherence among young black men who have sex with men (YBMSM) who have been successfully linked to care. This client-centered, 90-minute session consists of individual and dyadic components between an index young man and a support confidant (SC) who is identified by the index participant. In the first 20 minutes of the session, the social work interventionist (SWI) discusses the importance of HIV care and social support with the SC-index dyad. The next component consists of a 40-minute one-on-one discussion between the SWI and the SC on identifying and finding solutions to overcome barriers to providing social support to the index participant. For the final 20 minutes of the session, the SWI and the SC-index dyad create a tailored “care and support plan” that identifies the barriers to retention in care and ART adherence for YBMSM while also identifying the best solutions for each barrier. Following the completion of the 90-minute session, the SWI delivers four telephone boosters to the index participant at 2, 5, 8, and 11 months post baseline. The booster sessions focus on the implementation of the care and support plan as well as the emotional quality of the SC and index relationship.

##### Theoretical Basis

- Information-motivation-behavioral skills theory
- Motivational Interviewing (MI) strategies
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) strategies

##### Intervention Duration

- One 90-minute session and four telephone booster sessions conducted at 2, 5, 8, and 11 months post baseline

##### Intervention Settings

- Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs)
- Telephone

### Deliverer

- Social work interventionist

### Delivery Methods

- Goal setting/plan
- Problem-solving

### Structural Components

There are no structural components reported for this study.

## INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

**An intervention package is not available at this time.** Please contact **Alida Bouris**, School of Social Service Administration and Chicago Center for HIV Elimination, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637; and **John Schneider**, Departments of Internal Medicine and Public Health Sciences and Chicago Center for HIV Elimination, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637.

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## EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

### Study Location

The original evaluation study was conducted in Chicago, Illinois between 2012 and 2015.

### Key Intervention Effects

- Increased ART adherence
- Increased retention in care

### Recruitment Settings

Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs)

### Eligibility Criteria

Patients were eligible if they were HIV positive for more than 3 months, identified as black, were defined male at birth, and between the ages of 16 and 29 years old. Patients were also eligible if they engaged in anal or oral sex with a cisgender male in the past two years, owned a cell phone, and had one person in their social network who was aware of their HIV status. Young black gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men were excluded from the study if they were unable to provide consent or were planning on moving out of the study area within the next 12 months.

### Study Sample

The baseline study sample of 98 YBMSM is characterized by the following:

- *Mean age of 23.8 years*

### **Assignment Method**

Participants (N = 98) were randomized to 1 of 2 study arms: Project nGage (n = 45) or a treatment as usual (TAU) comparison (n = 53).

### **Comparison**

The treatment as usual (TAU) arm consisted of standard HIV primary care that is conducted within each clinical site.

### **Relevant Outcomes Measured**

- Self-reported ART medication adherence was measured at 3 and 12 months post-completion of the intervention using a visual analog scale to rate adherence for each medication taken in the last 30 days on a scale of 0 – 100%. The study used 90% adherence as the cut-off for optimal adherence.
- Retention in care was defined as having at least three HIV primary care visits within the past 12 months.
- Viral load was measured as 12 months post-completion of the intervention and was defined as viral suppression at  $\leq 500$  copies per mL

### **Participant Retention**

- Project nGage Intervention:
  - 88% retained at 3 months post-completion of intervention
  - 86% retained at 12 months post-completion of intervention
- Treatment as usual (TAU) Comparison:
  - 100% retained at 3 months post-completion of intervention
  - 91% retained at 12 months post-completion of intervention

### **Significant Findings on Relevant Outcomes**

- A significantly greater proportion of Project nGage participants reported  $\geq 90\%$  medication adherence than TAU participants at 12 months post-completion (OR=2.91, 95% CI = 1.10 - 7.71; p = 0.03).

### **Considerations**

- This study did not meet the best-evidence criteria for the Medication Adherence Chapter due to no significant positive intervention effects for viral load (p=0.23), as well as the sample size  $\leq 50$  in one of the study arms.
- The study is also determined to be evidence-based for the Linkage to, Retention in, and Re-engagement in Care (LRC) Chapter, as a significantly greater proportion of Project nGage participants had at least three HIV primary care visits in the previous 12 months than TAU participants (OR = 3.01, 95% CI: 1.05 - 8.69, p = 0.04).

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## REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bouris, A., Jaffe, K., Eavou, R., Liao, C., Kuhns, L., Voisin, D., & Schneider, J. A. (2017). [Project nGage: Results from a randomized controlled trial of a dyadic network support intervention to retain young black men who have sex with men in HIV care](#). *AIDS and Behavior*, 47, 3618-3629.

### Researchers

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