

## A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF HIV-POSITIVE WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN A RANDOMIZED CLINICAL TRIAL TO REDUCE DRINKING.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to qualitatively describe participant's experiences in a randomized controlled clinical trial of naltrexone vs. placebo to reduce drinking.

**Background:** Up to 20% of U.S. women consume alcohol at hazardous levels each year; however, women with HIV face additional individual and public health consequences. Interventions such as the prescription medication naltrexone have been effective in reducing drinking in non-HIV populations.

**Methods:** Using a qualitative approach, we interviewed 20 HIV-positive women after their final follow-up appointment. We sought to explore their experiences associated with drinking and attitudes and perceptions of participating in the clinical trial, and barriers or facilitators associated with alcohol treatment outside of the research setting. Throughout this study, participants and research staff remained blinded to receipt of naltrexone or placebo. Data were analyzed using methods consistent with content analysis.

**Results:** We identified three central themes in the analysis: changes in alcohol consumption level, effects of study medication, and individual issues surrounding adhering to treatment. Most women reported a reduction in the amount of alcohol they consumed prior to enrollment. The women reported that the research study staff was influential in their ability to reduce or quit drinking. Next, the women described positive and negative effects of the study medication even though they were not aware if they were in the intervention or control arm. Some women reported that the medication helped to reduce or stop their drinking while others reported no medication effect. To address barriers and facilitators in reducing drinking that may exist in real world settings, the women identified feelings of embarrassment, lack of access to transportation, or being in denial as potential barriers. On the contrary, the women described having social support, willingness to change, and proven efficacy of treatment as facilitators to help reduce their drinking.

**Conclusions:** Results indicated that a reduction in drinking for women participating in the clinical trial may have been influenced by factors other than the study medication. Developing interventions that combine medication to reduce drinking with attention to social support and changing attitudes about drinking may yield more successful outcomes than medication alone.

**\*\*Remember: Total word count for the full abstract is no more than 350 words.**

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This abstract fits perfectly with the field of HIV and alcohol research. While hazardous drinking is very common among men, HIV-positive women who consume alcohol at hazardous levels face additional health consequences. While providing treatment to HIV-positive women in hopes of reducing their drinking has never been studied, many studies have shown that treatment such as Naltrexone may be effective in reducing hazardous drinking. While majority of the studies have seen success of using pharmacotherapy in men, studies seeking to assess its efficacy in women with HIV is needed.