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Assessment of the behavioral intervention “STEPS TOWARDS HEALTH” for HIV-positive persons who inject drugs in Ukraine

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Background



- In Ukraine, persons who inject drugs (PWID) demonstrate significant losses across HIV treatment cascade.
- In 2015-2016, the USAID's RESPOND Project supported **2 NGOs in 2 regions of Ukraine** implementing behavioral intervention **“Steps towards Health”**, that was designed in Ukraine to re-engage in care HIV+ PWID who dropped out of HIV care (registered at AIDS clinic; no visit for 6 months).
- Intervention group: 5 individual counseling sessions + case management.
- Both groups: access to NGO standard of services.
- This randomized controlled trial assessed whether the intervention **“Steps towards Health”** improves re-engagement in HIV care among PWID in Ukraine.

Study cities in Dnipro and Zaporizhzhya Regions of Ukraine



Methods



OUTCOMES

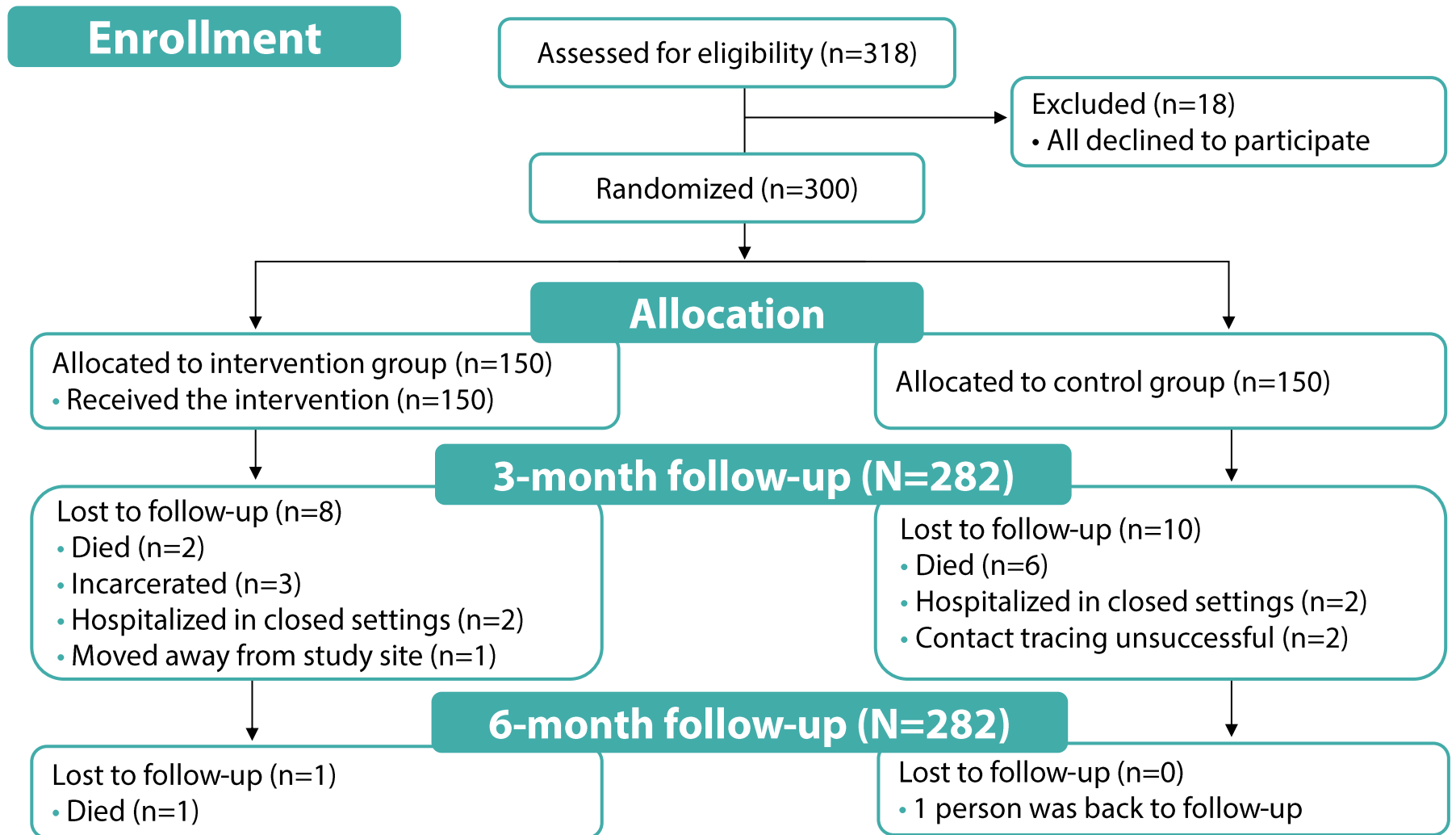
Re-engagement with HIV care:

- At least one visit to an ID physician at AIDS Center after enrollment in the study
- At least one CD4 test after enrollment in the study
- Initiation or return to ART

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

- Intent-to-treat analysis compared intervention and control groups at each assessment
- Outcomes were modeled by binary log-binomial regressions. Relative risks (RR) and 95% confidence intervals calculated to measure Intervention effect.

Participant flow diagram



Baseline characteristics of participants by assignment



		Intervention (N=150)		Control (N=150)		Total (N=300)		p-value
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
City	Kyryviy Rig	75	50%	75	50%	150	50%	1.000
	Melitopol	75	50%	75	50%	150	50%	
Age, mean (SD), years		39 (7)		38 (8)		39 (7)		0.498
Gender	Males	98	65%	91	61%	189	63%	0.403
	Females	52	35%	59	39%	111	37%	
Education	Primary	19	13%	17	11%	36	12%	0.523
	Secondary	40	27%	39	26%	79	26%	
	Vocational	83	55%	82	55%	165	55%	
	University	8	5%	11	8%	19	7%	
Marital status	Marriage/ partner	69	46%	85	48%	153	51%	0.114
	Single	79	53%	66	44%	145	48%	
	Missing	2	1%	0	0%	2	1%	
History of incarceration	Yes	78	52%	81	54%	159	53%	0.729
	No	72	48%	69	46%	141	47%	

Results



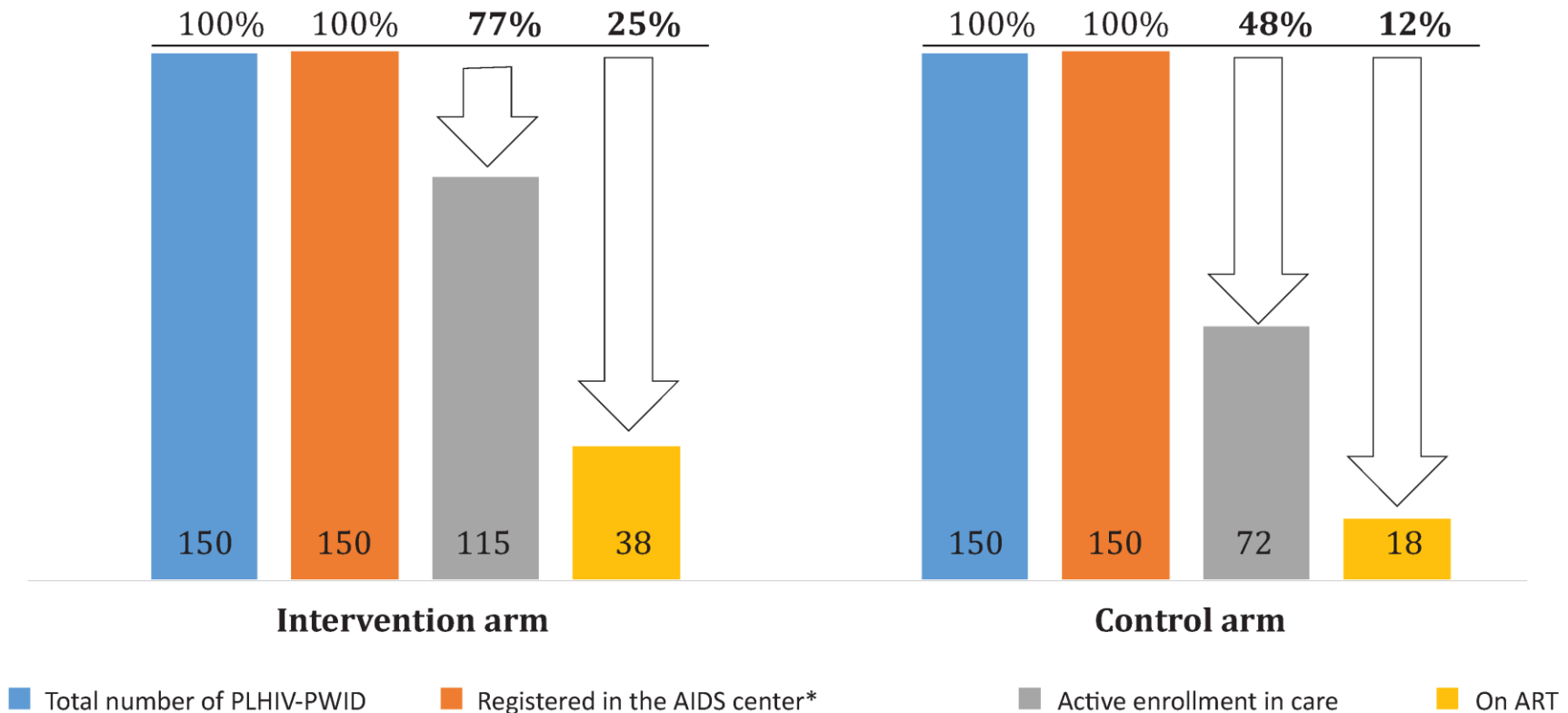
- **300 HIV+ PWID** consented and randomized 1:1 to IG or CG:
 - 63% males
 - mean age 39.0 ± 7.0 years
 - 53% reported history of incarcerationNo significant differences between groups at baseline.
- 94% intervention clients received all 5 sessions; sessions included all intervention key elements.
- **Follow-up rates** at 3- and 6-month assessments - **95%** and **94%** for **intervention group**, and **93%** and **94%** for **control group**.
- **Intervention group** participants were **more likely**:
 - to visit ID physician;
 - to have CD4 test;
 - to start or continue ART.

Relative risks for the study outcomes by assignment



	3-MONTH FOLLOW-UP			6-MONTH FOLLOW-UP		
	IG	CG	RR	IG	CG	RR
	n/N (%)	n/N (%)	(95% CI)	n/N (%)	n/N (%)	(95% CI)
Visited an ID physician at least once after enrollment in the study (ref.: no visit)	105/140 (75%)	65/142 (46%)	1.64 (1.34-2.01)	115/141 (82%)	72/141 (51%)	1.60 (1.34-1.91)
Had CD4 test at least once after enrollment in the study (ref.: no CD4 test)	-	-	-	112/141 (79%)	70/141 (50%)	1.60 (1.33-1.93)
Started ART (ref.: no ART)	-	-	-	38/141 (27%)	18/141 (13%)	2.11 (1.27-3.52)

HIV care cascade among study participants: 6-month assessment



Conclusions



- Behavioral intervention "Steps towards Health" demonstrated promising results in terms of its feasibility and effectiveness in re-engaging HIV-positive PWID who dropped out of HIV care. The intervention can be recommended for further dissemination in Ukraine.
- Despite intervention effect for clinical outcomes, significant gaps in the HIV care cascade were discovered in both groups.
- Further efforts are needed to assess the intervention effects in a longer perspective.



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