

**Title of Presentation** – The Intimacy Project: Bringing Sexy Back through Condom Decoration

**Presenter** – Emma Kaywin, Project Coordinator of Development and Communications

**Organization** – Institute for Advanced Medicine, Mount Sinai Health System

**Track:** Our Bodies

**Objective:** The objective of this workshop is to use an art-based hands-on project to facilitate conversation around the use of and feelings about barrier contraception for women living with HIV/AIDS.

**Methods:** The Intimacy Project workshop is a hands-on art program with a concurrent guided discussion that encourages participants to decorate condom boxes with imagery and messages that they would like to convey to a partner or be reminded of themselves during a sexual encounter. The use of barrier protection can bring up complex and intense feelings for persons living with HIV/AIDS, whether they are using them to protect a magnetic lover from becoming infected or to protect themselves from other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. Participants of all HIV statuses will be welcome to take part in this workshop and share their diverse experiences.

Materials to be made available for the workshop include condoms (both male and female), scissors, glue, pens, markers, and magazines. Participants will be provided with an overview of the project, and shown examples from previous workshops to get their creative ideas flowing.

During the artistic process, the workshop facilitator will engage participants in informal discussion about how they currently fit barrier protection into their lives, as well as more targeted questions such as: how they feel about condoms, and whether these sentiments have changed during different times in their lives, e.g., as they got older or if they seroconverted; if/how condoms feel like a barrier to intimacy; and what sort of messages they would like to convey to their lover/partner(s) during the moments when a condom is introduced. In the last 15 minutes of the workshop, the group will be convened to display their works of art and any broader comments they wish to share with the full group.

**Results:** The results of the workshop will be twofold: a deeper collective understanding of what it means to be an HIV positive woman who is working to take charge of her sexual health and the sexual health of her sexual partner(s) through the use of barrier protection; and the more tangible take-home results of multiple hand-decorated condom boxes.

**Conclusions:** The Intimacy Project workshop has been piloted in a number of casual settings, including with a group of HIV positive youth aged 18-25 in December 2014. Participants gave overwhelmingly positive feedback and expressed interest in attending additional workshops. One participant was inspired to bring the workshop to a younger teen setting to discuss protection, consent, and respect in youth as they explore their growing sexualities, which will take place later in 2015.