

Coverage of AIDS in Popular African American Magazines

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Understanding AIDS coverage by popular magazines that target readership in the African American population can be helpful to health and medical professionals, social workers, and journalists to better use popular magazines in disseminating HIV and AIDS information. Coverage of HIV and AIDS by 5 popular monthly magazines was examined between January 1981 and December 1994. Based on the number of articles published in the magazines, their coverage could be categorized into 3 distinct coverage periods. Although the magazines published several types of articles, the majority of the information fell into 4 content categories, thereby often reinforcing existing information and not adding to it. Similarly, an analysis of the terminology used to describe HIV, AIDS, and the people living with HIV and AIDS indicated that little has changed over the years.

Few health-related stories have sustained the attention of the media and the public for as long as the story of AIDS (Klaidman, 1991). AIDS has been greeted with

more fear, loathing, and prejudice than any other disease in this century, challenging some of our most deeply held beliefs about economic, moral, racial, sexual, and social issues (Lester, 1992; Lupton, 1994). AIDS was unheard of until 1981, but since then it has been covered by much of the media because of its impact on the lives of millions of Americans (Lupton, 1994).

During the early years of the epidemic, the mainstream media focused little attention on the impact of AIDS on the African American community (Hammonds, 1986) despite indications as early as January 1982 that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveillance data suggested that the African American community may be at increased risk for HIV and AIDS. Surveillance statistics from 1983 to 1985 confirmed this trend, and in August 1987 an official acknowledgment that AIDS disproportionately affected African Americans was made at the first CDC-sponsored national conference, "AIDS in the Minority Communities" (Jenkins, 1992). These trends have continued to the present day, with AIDS still affecting the African American community disproportionately (CDC, 1995).

Despite the risk to African Americans, the mainstream media failed to cover AIDS in the African American community in a consistent and comprehensive manner until several years into the epidemic (Hammonds, 1986). During this time, the mainstream media ignored the risks of HIV transmission through heterosexual sex and intravenous drug use among African Americans. This omission was particularly significant in light of the emphasis that mainstream media placed at the same time on these modes of transmission among White Americans (Hammonds, 1986; Lupton, 1994).

In the face of this lingering neglect on part of the mainstream media, the role of the African American media in informing its readership and the community at large becomes extremely important. Studies indicate that the media in general serve as important sources of information, metaphors, and values for communities. They often inform, reflect, challenge, and formulate our customs, morality, tastes, and thinking on a variety of issues including health and disease (Clarke, 1992). They have been successful in simplifying and popularizing complex health-related information for the public and have been cited as important sources of such information (Bractic & Greenberg, 1979; McDermott, Hawkins, Moore, & Cittadino, 1987).

Important components of the media, specifically the print media, are magazines. Magazines, like newspapers and television, serve as sources of information about social and health issues (Mauss, 1975; Schoenfeld, Meir, & Griffin, 1979). Popular magazines are particularly suited to cover AIDS because their formats are well tailored to cover the controversy, drama, and human interest involved in telling the story of AIDS with brevity, with simplicity, and in a compelling manner (Lupton, 1994).

Studies conducted on the role of magazines as sources of information suggest that they serve as important sources of AIDS information, particularly among young

people (Evans, Rutberg, Sather, & Turner, 1991; McDermott et al., 1987). In a study by Ndlovu and Sihlangu (1992) among a randomly selected sample of high school students, magazines were cited as one of the five preferred sources of AIDS information by both male and female students. Magazines were also indicated to be the most informative source of information about AIDS and HIV infection. In another study among primarily African American and Hispanic clients from family planning clinics, magazines were indicated as one of the top five sources of health information on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including AIDS (Krishnan, 1996). Finally, in a study examining sources of information about AIDS, both male and female African American churchgoers ranked "magazines for Black readers" fourth behind television, newspapers, and brochures or pamphlets as sources for AIDS information. In this study, more African American men reported using magazines as sources of AIDS information than did women (Brunswick, 1993).

The disproportionate number of African Americans continuing to be affected by AIDS (CDC, 1995; Hutchinson, 1992), the need for a culturally appropriate context for disseminating AIDS information to the African American community at large (Cancela, 1989), the relevance of magazines as sources of AIDS information (Albert, 1986), and the lack of studies on understanding the role of magazines that specifically target African American readership in the coverage of AIDS issues (Klaidman, 1991; Lupton, 1994) all provide the rationale for our study.

In this study, we examine the extent and the nature of AIDS coverage and the changes in this coverage between January 1981 and December 1994 by five popular monthly magazines that target readership in the African American community. The number of relevant articles published, their publication dates, and the format of the articles were determined. The articles were content analyzed, and the terminology used in the articles to describe AIDS and the people living with the virus HIV and the disease AIDS was examined.

METHOD

Selection of Magazines

Five monthly magazines were chosen for the study: *Ebony*, *Ebony-Man* (*EM*), *Emerge*, *Essence*, and *Young Sisters and Brothers* (*YSB*). These magazines were selected because they reflect a variety of readership and circulation levels. Magazines such as *YSB* target young African Americans, whereas *EM* focuses on issues that are of interest to African American men. Further, magazines like *Ebony* and *Essence* have been in publication for several decades, and others such as *Emerge* and *EM* began publication in the 1980s. Table 1 summarizes information about the five magazines included in the study.

TABLE 1
 Descriptions of Monthly Magazines Analyzed in the Study

	<i>Ebony</i>	<i>Ebony Man</i>	<i>Emerge</i>	<i>Essence</i>	<i>Young Sisters & Brothers</i>
Year started	1945	1985	1989	1970	1991
Circulation	1.8 million	200,000	150,000	950,000	Not available
Description/Readership	Articles cover issues of general interest to Black Americans. Stories feature Black Americans in the arts, business, and politics.	Not available	Articles cover general interest news items for upwardly mobile Blacks. Covers issues, ideas, and events from a Black perspective.	Articles cover Black women's interests and issues.	Articles cover movies, music, other news items for Black teens.

Note. Information is from *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory* (33rd ed., 1994-1995).

Selection and Use of Databases

Two databases (Ethnic Newswatch and Readers Guide to Periodical Literature) were used to obtain a list of articles published by the magazines between 1981 and 1994 on HIV and AIDS, condoms, and safer sex practices. Readers Guide to Periodical Literature was used to obtain the list of relevant articles published by *Ebony* and *Essence* magazine, whereas Ethnic Newswatch was used to obtain the list of relevant articles published by *Emerge* and *YSB*. *EM* was not listed in either of the databases. For those years and for issues of magazines not included in the databases, the researchers consulted each issue of the magazine to identify the relevant articles for analysis. The researchers also sent letters to the magazines asking them to provide a list of the articles they had published covering the search words *HIV*, *AIDS*, *condoms*, and *safer sex practices*. Three of the magazines (*EM*, *Essence*, and *YSB*) provided lists of articles that helped confirm the database search results. For *Ebony* and *Emerge*, the databases were the only sources for the list of relevant articles. The number of articles published, the types of articles published, and their dates of publication were compiled for each of the five magazines.

Using the same databases, searches were conducted to obtain lists of articles published in these magazines from 1981 to 1994 on breast cancer, drug abuse, heart disease, high blood pressure, homosexuality, bisexuality, STDs (other than HIV and AIDS), and sickle cell anemia. These topics were chosen to provide a comparison and context in which AIDS was being covered by these magazines.

Format Categories

The magazine articles were classified exclusively into 1 of the 10 format categories. These format categories were derived from the magazines themselves, which classified each of the articles into specific format categories. The 10 format categories used in the study were biographies or autobiographies, commentaries and viewpoints, cover stories, editorials, fiction, first person or personal accounts, health columns and health advice columns, informational stories, interviews, and obituaries.

Content Analysis

A content analysis design was used to analyze the content of all articles included in the study. Content analysis has been used to examine health content and trends in content of newspapers, magazines, and textbooks for a long time (Duncan, 1989).

All of the articles included in the study were content analyzed by first establishing coding categories. These categories were derived from operational defini-

tions and present-day understanding of AIDS, condoms, and safer sex practices and from the categories used by Pitts and Jackson (1989, 1993). Briefly, the 11 major categories were definitions and nomenclature; trends and statistics; prevention; education and awareness; transmission methods; symptoms; treatment modalities; policy and economics; politics, discrimination, and fears; celebrity portrayals; and other STDs.

The content of each article was coded "yes/no" for each of the content categories depending on whether the article covered each of the 11 content categories. We used this method of multiple categorizations that was described by Duncan and others because it helped analyze the content of the articles more thoroughly (Duncan, 1989).

Two researchers independently content coded all of the articles included in the study. The interrater reliability was defined as the total number of entries the two researchers placed in similar content categories divided by the total number of possible coding entries of 704 (64 articles \times 11 coding categories). The overall interrater reliability for this study was 95%. Similarly, the interrater reliability for each individual content categories was also calculated. The five content categories with less than 100% interrater reliabilities were the categories of celebrity portrayals (95%); prevention (90%); education and awareness (90%); politics, discrimination, and fears (90%); and policy and economics (85%). All rater differences were reconciled through discussions and negotiations, leading to a final agreement on the coding categorizations.

Analysis of Terminology

The content of the articles was also analyzed in terms of terminology—for the words, phrases, and metaphors used to describe the virus HIV, the disease AIDS, and the people living with HIV and AIDS.

RESULTS

Number and Types of Articles Published

The number of articles published and their publication years are summarized in Table 2. *Essence* magazine published the highest number of articles (27) between January 1981 and December 1994. Of the five magazines analyzed, *Ebony* and *Essence* were the first to publish articles on AIDS beginning in 1985. Since 1992, all of the five magazines have published articles on AIDS. The number of articles increased considerably in the 1990s, with a total of 15 articles in 1994.

TABLE 2
Number of Articles Published by Year

Year	<i>Ebony</i>	<i>Ebony Man</i>	<i>Emerge</i>	<i>Essence</i>	<i>Young Sisters & Brothers</i>	<i>Total No. of Articles</i>
1981	0	—	—	0	—	0
1982	0	—	—	0	—	0
1983	0	—	—	0	—	0
1984	0	—	—	0	—	0
1985	1	0	—	2	—	3
1986	0	0	—	0	—	0
1987	2	0	—	1	—	3
1988	2	0	—	0	—	2
1989	2	1	0	3	—	6
1990	1	1	1	4	—	7
1991	1	0	0	3	—	4
1992	3	2	2	4	1	12
1993	3	0	1	4	4	12
1994	4	0	1	6	4	15
Total	19	4	5	27	9	64

Note. Dashes indicate magazines not in publication during that year.

Based on their formats, the articles published in the five magazines studied were classified into 10 format categories as indicated in Table 3. A majority of the articles (33 articles out of 64) were informational. *Essence* magazine used the greatest variety of formats (7) in its articles to inform its readership using informational stories (11 articles), first person or personal accounts (5 articles), and health and health advice columns (4 articles) most often. *Ebony* and *Emerge* magazines used five different formats each to cover AIDS. Although all of the magazines published informational articles on AIDS, none of them published editorials regarding AIDS.

Content Analysis

Table 4 summarizes the findings from the content analysis. A total of 62 articles (97%) discussed definitions and nomenclature (the first content category). As evident from the table, a majority of the articles also mentioned the content categories of prevention (72%), trends and statistics (67%), and education and awareness (59%). Fewer articles mentioned symptoms, treatment modalities, and transmission methods. As indicated in the table, the remaining four content categories were also poorly covered in the articles.

TABLE 3
Types of Magazine Articles Published (Format Codes)

<i>Format Codes or Categories</i>	<i>Ebony</i>	<i>Ebony Man</i>	<i>Emerge</i>	<i>Essence</i>	<i>Young Brothers & Sisters</i>	<i>Total No. of Articles</i>
Biographies or autobiographies	3	0	1	0	0	4
Commentaries and viewpoints	0	0	1	3	0	4
Cover stories	0	0	1	2	0	3
Editorials	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fiction	0	0	0	1	0	1
First person or personal account	1	0	0	5	1	7
Health and health advice columns	0	0	0	4	3	7
Informational stories	12	4	1	11	5	33
Interviews	2	0	1	1	0	4
Obituaries	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	19	4	5	27	9	64

TABLE 4
Content Analysis: Percentage of Magazine Articles by Content Category

<i>Category</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>Overall</i>
Definitions and nomenclature	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	95	100	97
Trends and statistics	75	100	100	89	100	50	80	46	56	67
Prevention	75	75	50	72	67	100	65	54	71	72
Education and awareness	75	100	100	28	69	50	58	33	61	59
Transmission methods	75	75	50	11	38	25	10	6	21	27
Symptoms	100	50	0	17	25	0	20	6	4	16
Treatment modalities	75	50	50	0	25	50	37	6	4	19
Policy and economics	75	75	50	17	31	50	10	6	0	14
Politics, discrimination, and fears	50	50	100	72	56	50	25	42	40	39
Celebrity portrayals	0	0	0	0	38	17	30	48	0	19
Other STDs	0	0	50	89	69	67	5	33	23	36

Note. The percentages of all the articles published during each year that covered each of the content categories are listed. Only those years in which articles were published are shown in the table. STD = sexually transmitted diseases.

TABLE 5
Words, Phrases, and Metaphors in the Five Magazines

<i>To Describe HIV and AIDS</i>	<i>To Describe Persons With HIV and AIDS</i>
Ebony	Ebony
Deadly threat	Victims
Disease's lethal clutches	Prey
Affliction	
Lethal epidemic	
Death sentence	
Equal opportunity disease	
AIDS menace	
Deadly horrible disease	
Insidious disease	
AIDS epidemic	
Plague	
Ebony Man	Ebony Man
Deadly epidemic	Disproportionate casualties
White gay male disease	
White gay male problem	
Emerge	Emerge
AIDS epidemic	Sufferers
Gay White man's disease	Innocent victims
Tragedy	
Essence	Essence
Equal opportunity disease	Victims
Gay plague	Sufferers
Deadly disease	
Fatal modern plague	
Young Brothers & Sisters	Young Brothers & Sisters
Proverbial wildfire	—

Coverage of Other Issues

The number of articles published by the magazines between January 1981 and December 1994 on other specific topics was determined. The topics were breast cancer, drug abuse, heart disease, high blood pressure, homosexuality, bisexuality, other STDs, and sickle cell anemia. Of the topics examined, heart disease was covered most extensively with 31 articles being published collectively by the five magazines. *Ebony* (13 articles) and *Essence* (18 articles) published all of these articles. Of the 23 articles on drug abuse *Ebony* and *Essence* published 9 and 13 articles, respectively. High blood pressure was covered only by *Ebony* and *Essence*, which together published 13 articles. Twelve articles were published on homosexuality and bisexuality, with *Essence* magazine publishing 10 of the articles. With respect to breast cancer, a total of 9 articles were published in the 14 years

(1981–1994), with *Essence* publishing the majority of them (6). Only 2 articles were published by the magazines on sickle cell anemia, and 8 articles were published on STDs other than HIV and AIDS.

Terminology

The specific words, phrases, and metaphors used to describe HIV and AIDS and people living with HIV and AIDS are compiled in Table 5. The five magazines used similar words, phrases, and metaphors to describe HIV and AIDS and the people living with HIV and AIDS. This terminology has changed little since 1981. Words and terms such as *deadly*, *devastating*, *fatal modern plague*, *lethal*, *menace*, and *proverbial wildfire* have been used throughout the years to describe AIDS.

The virus HIV, similarly, has been described as *deadly*, *dreaded*, and *raging*—all words implying its strength and abilities to overcome or defeat the body's immune system. This type of characterization was further emphasized by the phrases and metaphors used to describe how HIV and AIDS affect people: "Black Americans have fallen victim to the disease's lethal clutches ..." (*Ebony*, 1985); "With the deadly threat of AIDS hovering over their heads ..." (*Ebony*, 1990); "With AIDS looming ever larger ..." (*Essence*, 1991); and "Like the proverbial wildfire among young people" (*YSB*, 1994).

DISCUSSION

Of the five magazines, *Ebony* and *Essence* published the first articles on AIDS in 1985. This was 4 years after the first report of "a new fatal illness" was published in the scientific publication *Mortality and Morbidity Reports*, 3 years after newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* and weekly news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* published their first articles on AIDS, and 2 years after the monthly publication *Reader's Digest* published its first article in 1983. This delay or "lag period" between the first report on AIDS and the first articles in *Ebony* and *Essence* is significant in light of the mounting evidence as early as 1982–1983 that indicated that African Americans may be at a higher risk than the general public for HIV and AIDS.

Despite this early evidence, neither of these magazines mentioned anything about this "new fatal illness" until 1985. This lag period may have been caused by several reasons, including (a) the magazines' desire to be cautious and to not raise a premature alarm in the community, (b) the need of the magazines to avoid implications that AIDS was a "Black disease" by underemphasizing its impact on the African American community, and (c) the hesitation on part of the magazines to confront issues such as homosexuality and bisexuality considered taboo in the

African American community. A similar lack of AIDS coverage was reported by Hammonds (1986) in his analysis of *Ebony* and *Essence* through 1986. This treatment of AIDS by these two magazines was similar to that of the mainstream print media in the early years (Nelkin, 1991).

The remaining three magazines included in the study published their first articles on AIDS almost a decade into the epidemic in the United States—*EM* in 1989, *Emerge* in 1990, and *YSB* in 1992. However, these three magazines did not begin publication until 1985 or later, and so they could not be considered in this discussion of early AIDS coverage by these magazines.

Based on the number of articles published by the magazines, their coverage of AIDS can be divided into three distinct and consecutive coverage periods. Following the initial lag period that spanned 1981 to 1985, the magazines began publishing articles on AIDS, increasing their numbers steadily and slowly. Between 1986 and 1991, the magazines collectively published 22 articles on AIDS. This period between 1986 and 1991 may be considered the slow growth period. Beginning in 1992 and continuing through December 1994, the magazines published a total of 39 articles, an increase of 77% compared to the number published between 1986 and 1991. These years (1992–1994) may be regarded as the rapid growth period. In 1991, the five magazines collectively published 4 articles, and this number increased to 12 articles each in 1992 and 1993. In 1994 *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *YSB* each published 4 articles. This increase in the number of articles coincided with indications that African American women and children were at increased risk for AIDS. The plight of African American women and their children living with HIV and AIDS may have served as a wake-up call motivating the magazines to increase their coverage. There may have been a realization on the part of magazine editors that if women were at risk for AIDS then the whole community could be at risk.

An examination of the types of articles reveals that all of the magazines we analyzed used informational articles most often to discuss issues of HIV and AIDS. The magazines also used other types of articles such as interviews, first person or personal accounts, health and health advice columns, commentaries and viewpoints, and biographical or autobiographical articles, to a lesser extent. *Essence* magazine used the first person and personal accounts format very effectively to convey information about AIDS. In fact, in the December 1994 issue, the magazine used this format to tell the story of Rae Lewis-Thornton, an African American woman living with AIDS. Although first person and personal accounts are effective because they play on the emotions of the readers, they often tend to diminish the seriousness and the risks of AIDS to the population at large.

Another strategy that both *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines have used to address issues regarding AIDS, particularly those considered difficult or taboo in the community, was to address them through the format of health and health advice columns. This strategy is useful in allowing the magazines to find a way of addressing a variety of AIDS issues without taking a stand on them or without

offending prevailing moral, social, and religious norms in the community. *Ebony* and *Essence* published at least one health column and one health advice column in every issue between January 1981 and December 1994, using them to cover a wide range of health topics and disease conditions. The advice columns often contained addresses, telephone numbers, and referral sources for further information and assistance on the topic under discussion. *EM* and *YSB* published a health column but not a health advice column. *Emerge* did not publish either of these types of columns.

Between January 1981 and December 1994, the five magazines published more articles on AIDS (64 articles) than on heart disease (31 articles), drug abuse (23 articles), high blood pressure (13 articles), homosexuality or bisexuality (12 articles), breast cancer (9 articles), other STDs (8 articles), or sickle cell anemia (2 articles). This pattern of coverage of various health and other related issues suggests that the five magazines paid only minimal attention to health issues affecting the African American community, increasing their attention only when the health issue became a major crisis or, as in the case of AIDS, reached epidemic proportions. This pattern of coverage is reflected in the way the magazines have covered AIDS since 1981.

With respect to the content analysis results, the magazines continued to cover the four content categories of definitions and nomenclature, trends and statistics, prevention, and education and awareness. However, the coverage of content categories of symptoms and transmission methods has progressively decreased through the years, probably because the magazine editors felt that there was considerable information on these issues available elsewhere. Similarly, the content category of treatment modalities was covered poorly, suggesting that the magazines paid little attention to the latest treatment discoveries or experimental procedures. The content category of policy and economics continues to be poorly covered in the magazines despite the fact that such issues are becoming increasingly important and relevant. On the other hand, the content category of politics, discrimination, and fears was covered more often. How do we address AIDS, how must we treat people living with AIDS, how can we fund their care and treatment as AIDS becomes a chronic health issue, how best can we educate people on overcoming their fears, and how must we legislate policies to address the discrimination that people living with HIV and AIDS face are some of the issues and questions that were part of these content categories that were neglected by the magazines included in the study.

One of the content categories was celebrity portrayals. Nineteen percent (12 out of 64) of the articles covered this category by discussing Magic Johnson, Arthur Ashe, or other celebrities who are HIV positive or living with AIDS. On November 7, 1991, Earvin "Magic" Johnson announced that he was HIV positive. His dramatic announcement did not increase AIDS coverage by the magazines included in the study. Those articles that followed Johnson's announcement focused on his per-

sonal life, his triumphs as a basketball player, and how he and his family were coping with the news. None of the articles used his story to focus attention of the African American community on issues of heterosexual transmission of HIV and AIDS and the need to practice protective sexual behaviors. Further, none of the articles dealt with the issue of what role celebrities can play in informing and educating the community on HIV and AIDS. The Magic Johnson story and its coverage proved to be a missed opportunity for the five study magazines to initiate and heighten the discourse on a variety of AIDS issues including condom use. Similarly, few articles used the story about Arthur Ashe's illness and death to emphasize the fact that HIV and AIDS can affect everyone in the community and that there was a need to be compassionate and nonjudgmental to those living with the virus or with the disease.

The content analysis results suggest that although the magazines continued to cover some of the content categories (definitions and nomenclature, trends and statistics, prevention, and education and awareness) extensively, they failed to do the same consistently with some of the other content categories such as treatment modalities; policy and economics; and politics, discrimination, and fears. The magazines thus tended to reinforce existing information and prevailing notions about AIDS playing a somewhat limited and passive role in the dissemination of AIDS information. They served to document AIDS-related information and events, mostly serving as gatekeepers of AIDS information that was noncontroversial and nonthreatening. By failing to expand their AIDS coverage to consistently include issues of policy, politics, discrimination, societal biases, and fears, these magazines lost an opportunity to set the agenda for coverage of AIDS in a context that was culturally appropriate, meaningful, and relevant to the African American community.

Little has changed in the terminology used to describe the virus HIV, the disease AIDS, and the people living with HIV and AIDS despite medical and scientific advances that have prolonged the life as well as improved the quality of life of people who are HIV positive and of those living with AIDS. The words and phrases used in the articles emphasized a desperate, war-like or battlefield notion where people with HIV and AIDS are fighting a battle over which they have little control. This terminology included battlefield analogies that resembled others that have been used before to describe diseases such as Tuberculosis, syphilis, and cancer (Sontag, 1990).

Through such emphatic, pessimistic, and strong language, the magazines clearly communicated to their readership the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS on the African American community. However this terminology failed to reflect the work, the commitment, and the advances made by caregivers, community members, educators, and the public health and medical communities. It also failed to reflect the hopes and desires of people living with HIV and AIDS and their need to continue with their lives.

The use of such strong language can effectively communicate information, but it can also discourage those at the greatest risk of HIV and AIDS from taking positive steps in dealing with their illness and continuing to lead productive and quality lives. Pitts and Jackson (1993) suggested that the continual negative description of HIV and AIDS does little to convince people that there is hope. Further, such pessimistic reactions when shared by the healthcare professionals and researchers impede the development of prevention and intervention efforts as well as necessary social services. Such negative terminology reinforces the hopelessness and pessimism many in the community feel about HIV and AIDS.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study findings indicate that the five magazines need to expand their AIDS coverage to include issues of policy and economics, politics and discrimination, and treatment modalities. They need to serve as reinforcers, as agenda setters as well as gatekeepers, in the coverage and dissemination of AIDS information in the African American community. Health educators can play an important role in enhancing this dissemination process and work collaboratively with the writers and editors of these magazines. We propose the following ideas to enhance the coverage of AIDS by these magazines:

1. Establish collaborations between health educators and magazine staff writers: Health educators and staff writers need to collaborate on writing informational articles for the magazines. This can enhance the accuracy, the appropriateness, the timeliness, and the content of the articles to reflect the various dimensions of AIDS and expand the magazines' coverage of AIDS and other diseases affecting African Americans.
2. An advisory board for the health columns and health advice columns: Health educators and other health professionals need to serve as advisors for the magazines' health columns and health advice columns to bring a variety of AIDS and other health-related issues to the attention of the magazines' readership.
3. Involvement of the entire community: Community leaders, activists, researchers, and politicians need to write guest columns, editorials, and commentaries that express their opinions, thoughts, and feelings about various AIDS issues. This could be one way for the magazines to incorporate a variety of views on AIDS from the community as well as help raise the consciousness of the African American community to the issues of AIDS.
4. Personal portrayals: Expand personal portrayals and stories of celebrities and other role models to explore and discuss AIDS issues in ways that are interesting to the readers.

5. Role of magazines: We need to recognize and understand how popular magazines can serve as sources of AIDS information and find new and innovative ways of filling in the informational gaps that exist in the community.

These efforts can translate into greater understanding and compassion for AIDS and for those living with HIV and AIDS in the African American community. AIDS information in these magazines can no longer be in the form of simplistic rhetoric or popular messages. These magazines can no longer merely document the progression of HIV and AIDS in the community or rely on a passive treatment of HIV and AIDS in their pages. They need to present the AIDS information and messages in an appropriate, bold, direct, and effective manner. Some courage on the part of the magazines is essential in covering an illness such as AIDS steeped in medical, social and moral controversies and mysteries. *Essence* and *YSB* have begun to take steps in this direction with major articles and entire issues in 1995 devoted to HIV and AIDS and to sexual issues. They inspire hope and set an example for others to follow.

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