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# Obtaining Input on Research Related to Alcohol and HIV

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**Engagement Probe: Moderator introduction; participants complete the demographic paperwork.**

## Moderator Introduction and Purpose of Group

Hello. My name is [name]. I'd like to start off by thanking each of you for taking time to participate today. We'll be here for about an hour

**Explain the purpose of the focus group; Now, I would like to give you information about how this will work.** Most of you are here because you participated in the Florida Cohort study some time ago, now we have a new study the Contingency Management Study. This study encourages short-term and long-term drinking cessation so that we can better understand how changes in alcohol consumption can result in better health outcomes and less HIV transmission. We believe that focus group, such as this one, will help us understand how participants in the new study will be able to follow the study requirements; what levels of compensation participants would consider to be adequate for participation; discuss stigma associated with wearing an alcohol biosensor and any potential barriers to truthfulness or participation in this new study.

**Ask permission to record interview:** "To be sure that we do not forget anything of what will be discussed today, we will record the focus group. When the report has been written and we are finished with the information, we will destroy all recordings. Do you have any questions about that?"

**Ask the volunteer to sign consent and demographic forms:** [if form is unsigned] "Before we begin, I am going to ask you to sign this consent form which includes all that I just explained to you and states that you decided voluntarily to participate in this focus group. We will also ask you to fill out a second form where we are asking about your demographic characteristics and a few questions related to your drinking. I will read the questions out loud and will give you time to answer. This way the group can finish at the same time. Thank you."

## Ground rules

**"Before we begin, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate. Now I would like to talk about the ground Rules for this focus group:** "(1) We want to assure you that everything you tell us will remain **confidential**. That means that no one will know what you said here, not your doctor nor anyone else you might have seen at the clinic. We also ask you to respect the confidentiality of other group members by not discussing outside of the group what a specific person might have said. We will not use names to call on each other; we will assign a number to each person to identify themselves when they speak instead of using their name, starting on my

left [**Note to facilitator:** *Point to one person at a time and say “You’re #1, #2,....etc until all participants have received a number. Then test to make sure each person remembers his number*]. When we have done all the focus groups, we will write a report to summarize the information we received from all the group participants. Your names will not appear anywhere in this report. (2) We would like all of you to **participate in the discussion and give your honest opinions and thoughts about the topics we will discuss**. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will discuss, so we would like you to feel comfortable about giving your opinions. (3) We ask that you all **turn off your cells** to avoid any distractions during the next hour or so that we will spend together. Do you have any questions?

## Focus Group Questions

**Exploration probes-approximately 15 minutes each.**

1. **Breakdown of compensation-** *The study will last one year, the person participating in the study will come to the initial assessment and return at 6 weeks, 3 months, and at 1 year. Each time we will do a few tests including a neuroimaging (fMRI) test, a detailed neurocognitive assessment and blood drawn. In addition to what I’ve mentioned participants will need to abstain (preferable) or **reduce drinking as much as possible** for 6 weeks to 3 months. The participant will be compensated for abstaining from drinking and for the assessments. The compensation for the study has not been completely determine, there are a few options which I will run it by you now.*
  - A. *Get paid every week vs. every other week vs. once a month*
  - B. *If the participant during the week drinks should he/she not get pay for that week, or get pay less vs. someone that did not drink that week?*
  - C. *Do you think that the incentives (money) be smaller at the beginning and greater at the end or equal payments?*
  - D. *Would you be ok to stay at the hospital most of the day for the tests?*
  - E. *Any other comment*
  
2. **Barriers to participation:** *What do you think are some of the barriers to participating in this study?*
  - A. *Transportation*
  - B. *Language*
  - C. *Compensation that may interfere with current benefits.*
  - D. *Any other barrier that you can think of?*
  
3. **Time commitment:** *We talked about some of the barriers, how about time commitment. Would you be willing to participate for the length of the study?*
  - A. *How do you feel about spending time at the hospital*
  - B. *Would you have time to sometimes answer phone calls from the research associate that can be length?*
    - A. *Would you be able to schedule a specific time for phone calls?*
    - B. *As far as the contingency management, where you stop drinking or drink to a minimum how often you do feel is necessary to be offered feedback/support?*

4. **Stigma of biosensor-** Now we are going to talk about the biosensor, I brought one with me. I will circulate across the group so that you can see it. This biosensor will need to wear it around the ankle and you can't take it off. It is safe, you can take a shower. But, you can't go to the pool or the beach because it cannot be submerged in the water.
  - A. Do you think you would wear it?
  - B. Let me demonstrate, it goes around the ankle and most likely will be visible to others.
  - D. Would wearing this biosensor discourage you from participating?
  - C. What if a friend, or a family member or a coworker asks about the biosensor, how would you explain it? (Explaining to co-workers that this is for research).
  
5. **Truthfulness vs. difficulty of sobriety:** It is difficult to stop drinking we know that
  - A. What can we do to encourage you to stop drinking for 30 days .. 90 days?
  - B. Do you think people would be honest about their alcohol drinking during this study, why or why not?
  
6. **Exit question—recaps/what else is important to discuss?** The moderator repeats the highlights of what was discussed and possibly agreed upon. 5-minute period allows participants any last comments

## Closing

Thanks for coming today and talking about these issues. Your comments have given us lots of different ways to see this issue. I thank you for your time.