

# Woman-Focused HIV Prevention in Russia: Findings from a Randomized Controlled Trial

*Presented by*  
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*Presented at*  
The US East Europe Collaboration:  
Developing Successful Research Projects  
Vilnius, Lithuania • April 27, 2009



# Collaborators in St. Petersburg

- Evgeny Krupitsky
- Edwin Zvartau
- Pavlov State Medical University
- A team of researchers, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, statisticians...

This research is supported by National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) grant RO1 DA11609.





# Multinational Teamwork





# Intersecting Risks for IDU Russian Women

- **Alcohol and other drug use** is universal and may lead to
  - Risky sexual behaviors
  - HIV transmission
- **Unsafe needles and injecting drug practices** may lead to
  - HIV transmission
- Substance abuse intersects with **violence**



Worldwide, many women *lack the power to control their sexual relationships* and they are at high risk for HIV.



# History and Sites of the Women's CoOp Studies

1. Raleigh-Durham  
(1998–present)

NIDA and CDC

4. Russia  
(2006–present)

NIDA

2. Pretoria  
(2001–present)

NIDA and NIAAA

3. Cape Town  
(2003–present)

NIDA, NICHD,  
and NIAAA



# Core Elements of the Adapted Women's CoOp Interventions

## HIV Prevention Intervention

- Multiple Sessions
- Cue Card Driven
- Individual or Group Format

## Key Components

- Sexual Risk, Substance Use & Risk, and Violence
  - Heavy alcohol use, impaired sex, victimization
  - Biological testing
- **Behavioral Skills Training**
  - Male and female condom use skills
  - Role-play to improve negotiation and communication skills
- **Personalized Risk-Reduction Plan (“Action Plan”)**
  - Participants create specific and realistic goals for themselves

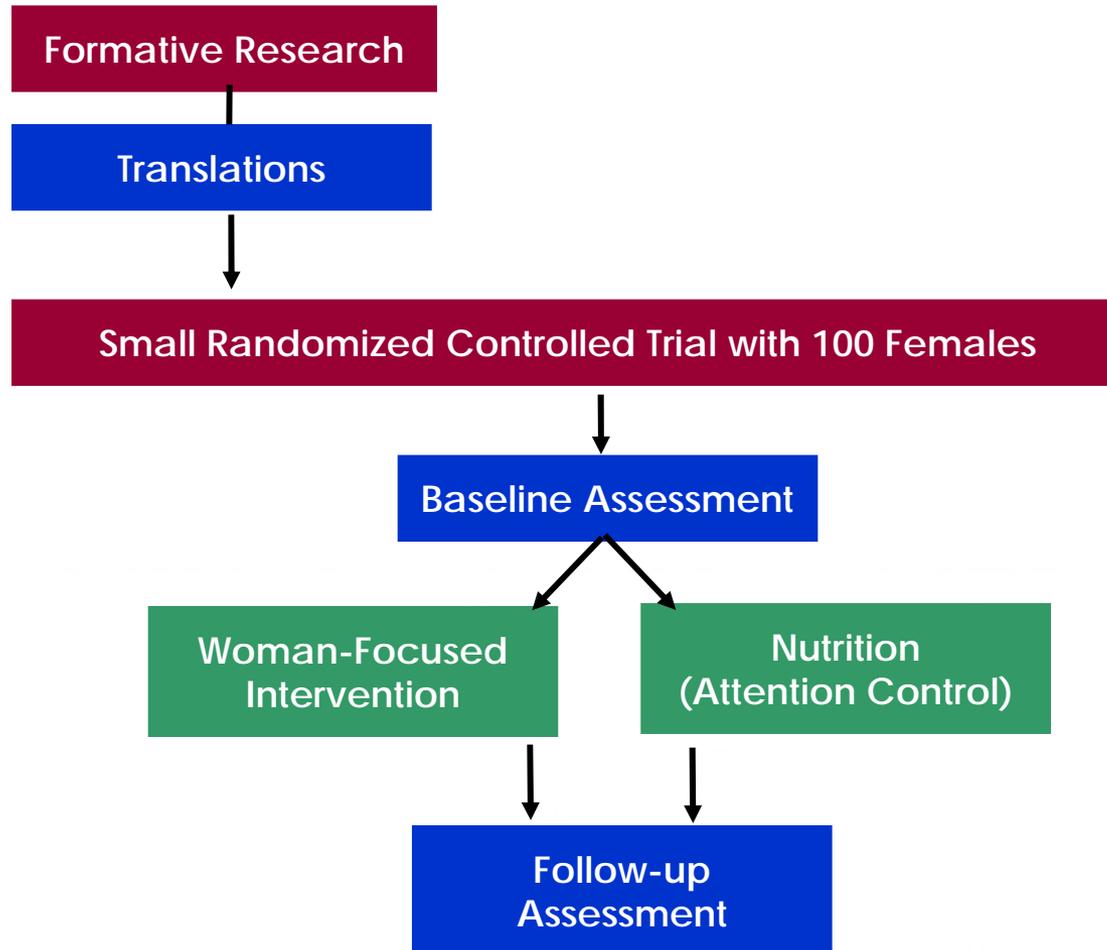


# Goals for Woman-Focused HIV Prevention in Russia

- **Aim 1:** To examine the prevalence and nature of injecting drug use and sexual risk in St. Petersburg, Russia, among 100 females aged 18 to 30 who are in treatment; and to identify drug use patterns, injecting risks, sexual and relationship risks, HIV risk perception, and risks for victimization and violence.
- **Aim 2:** To pilot test the adapted brief Russian Women's CoOp in a small randomized feasibility study comparing women receiving the intervention with women receiving rapid HIV testing and nutritional counseling alone.



# Study Design: Woman-Focused HIV Prevention in Russia



# Употребление наркотиков и отношения

В прошлый раз мы говорили о ВИЧ, половом и инъекционном риске заражения ВИЧ. Сегодня мы поговорим о том, как предотвратить насилие.

Употребление наркотиков может приводить к проблемам в отношениях

- Иногда женщины вынуждены оставаться с партнером, употребляющим наркотики, из-за финансовой зависимости или по другим причинам
- Иногда мужчины изменяют Вам с другими женщинами, а потом уговорами остаются с Вами





# Eligibility

## Study Eligibility Criteria

- Female
- 18 to 30 years old
- Injected drugs in the past year
- Currently in substance abuse treatment
- Consent to participate in the study
- Provide locator information for follow-up assessment in the St. Petersburg area



# Participant Characteristics (N=100)

|   | <i><b>Statistic</b></i> |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Mean age</b>                           | 26 (2.9 SD)             |
| <b>Mode</b>                               | 28                      |
| <b>Education</b>                          |                         |
| Less than high school                     | 20.0%                   |
| High school                               | 31.0%                   |
| Greater than high school                  | 49.0%                   |
| <b>Marital status</b>                     |                         |
| Single                                    | 17.0%                   |
| Involved, but not living with sex partner | 27.0%                   |
| Married or living as married              | 41.0%                   |
| Separated, Divorced, Widowed              | 15.0%                   |
| <b>Ever given birth</b>                   | 42.0%                   |
| <b>Ever told HIV+</b>                     | <b>57.0%</b>            |



# Baseline Sexual Risk Behaviors (N=100)

|   | <i>Statistic</i> |
|---|------------------|
| Mean age at first sex   | 16 (2.2 SD)      |
| <b>Ever traded sex for drugs, money, clothing, shelter, or any other goods</b>                        | 44.0%            |
| <b>Ever had sex with main sex partner to get heroin injected</b>                                      | 57.0%            |
| <b>Any unprotected sex acts with main partner in the past 30 days</b>                                 | 82.3%            |
| Mean number unprotected vaginal sex acts with main sex partner in 30 days prior to entering treatment | 8 (8.5 SD)       |

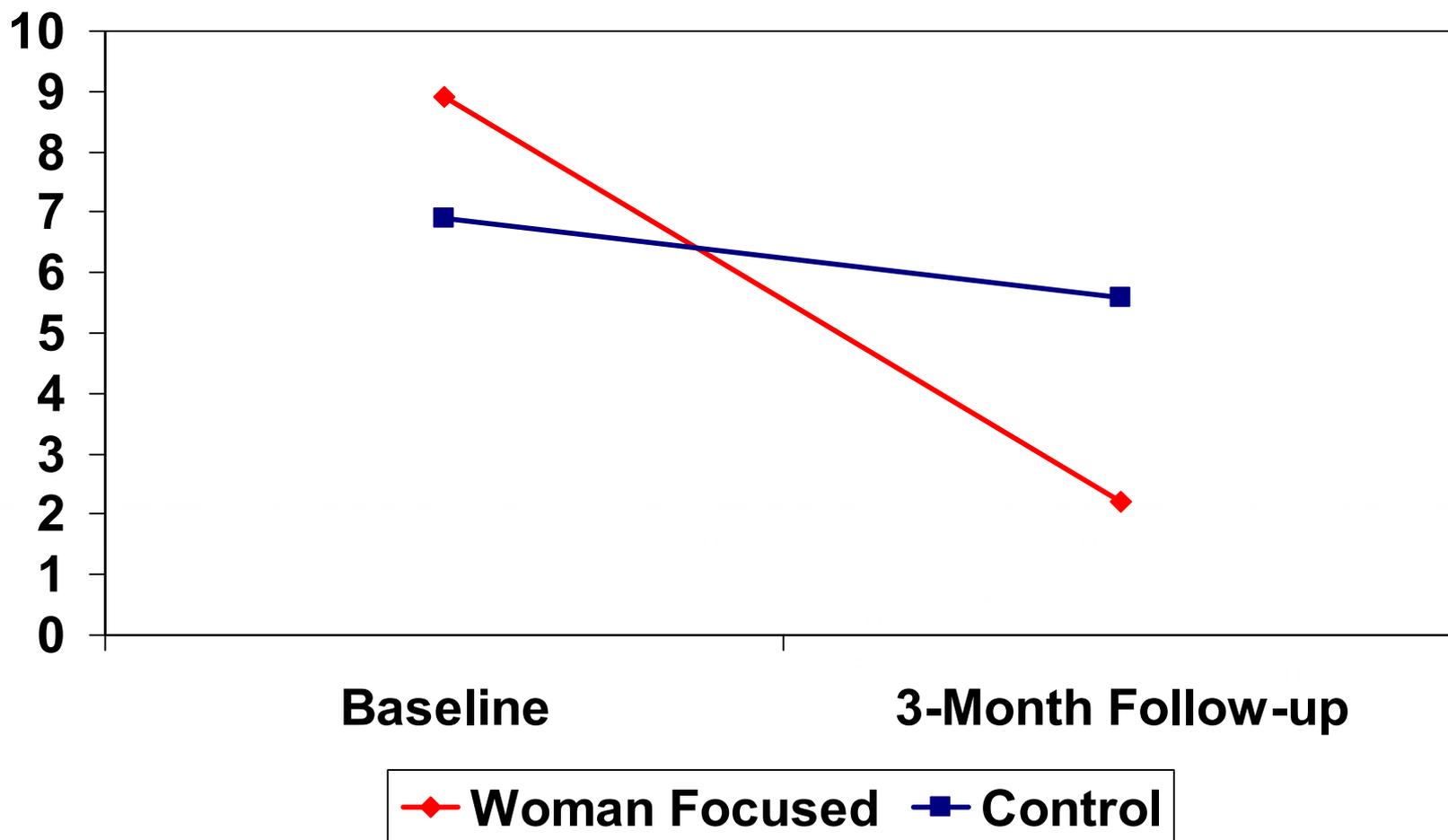


# Baseline Injecting Risk Behaviors (N=100)

|  | <i>Statistic</i> |
|--|------------------|
| <b>Mean age at first time injected</b>   | 18 (3.2 SD)      |
| <b>Intimate partner helped inject first time</b>   | 22.0%            |
| <b>Mean number of injections in past 30 days prior to treatment</b>                            | 96 (39.8SD)      |
| <b>Mean number of injections in past 30 days prior to treatment that clean needle was used</b> | 70 (45.9 SD)     |
| <b>Ever shared works that had been used by someone else</b>                                    | 50.0%            |
| <b>Usually use syringe with needle that comes off</b>  | 41.0%            |



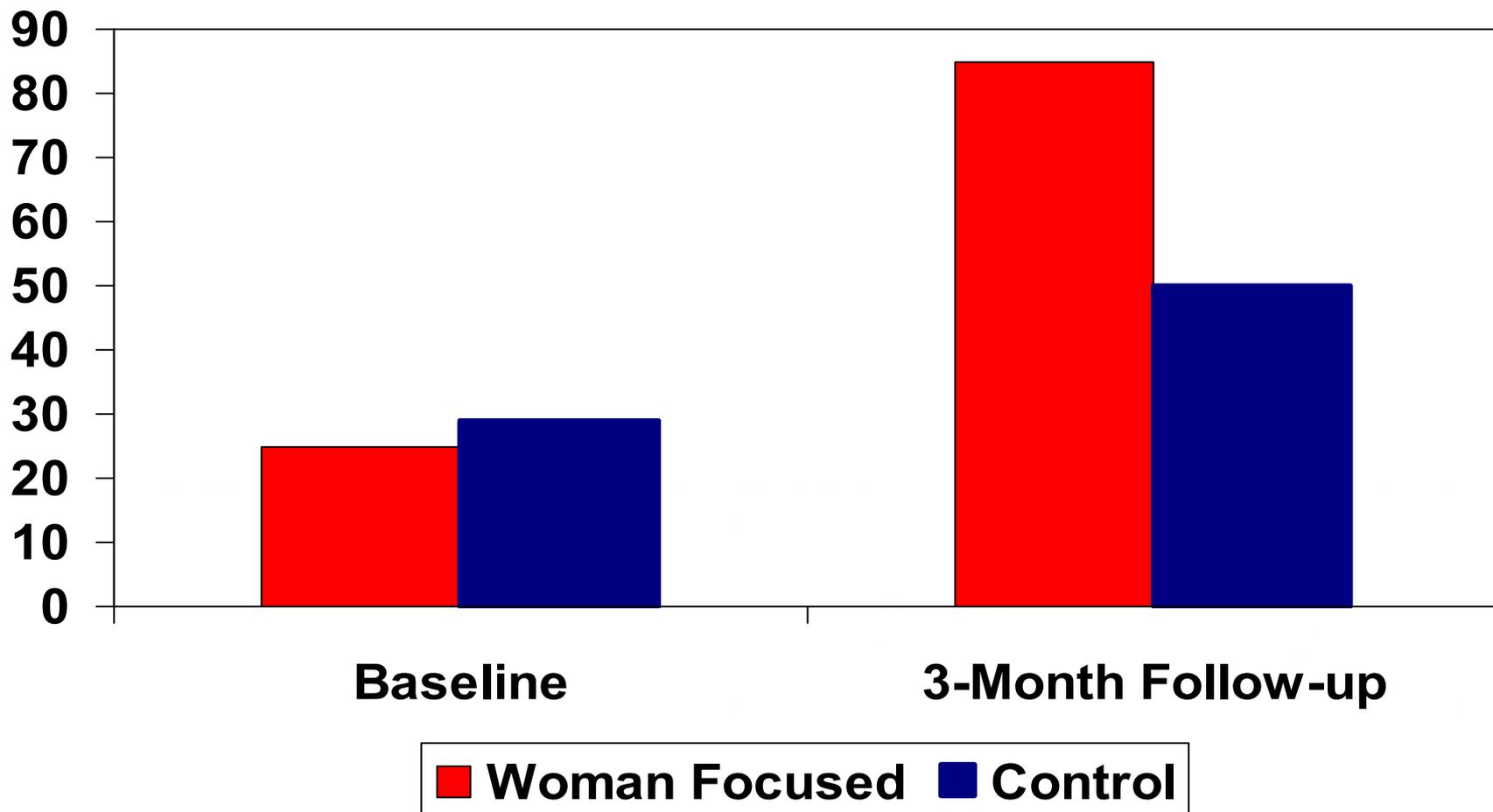
# Mean Number of *Unprotected* Sex Acts with Main Partner (n=91)\*



\* p<.05; Data refer to previous 30 days



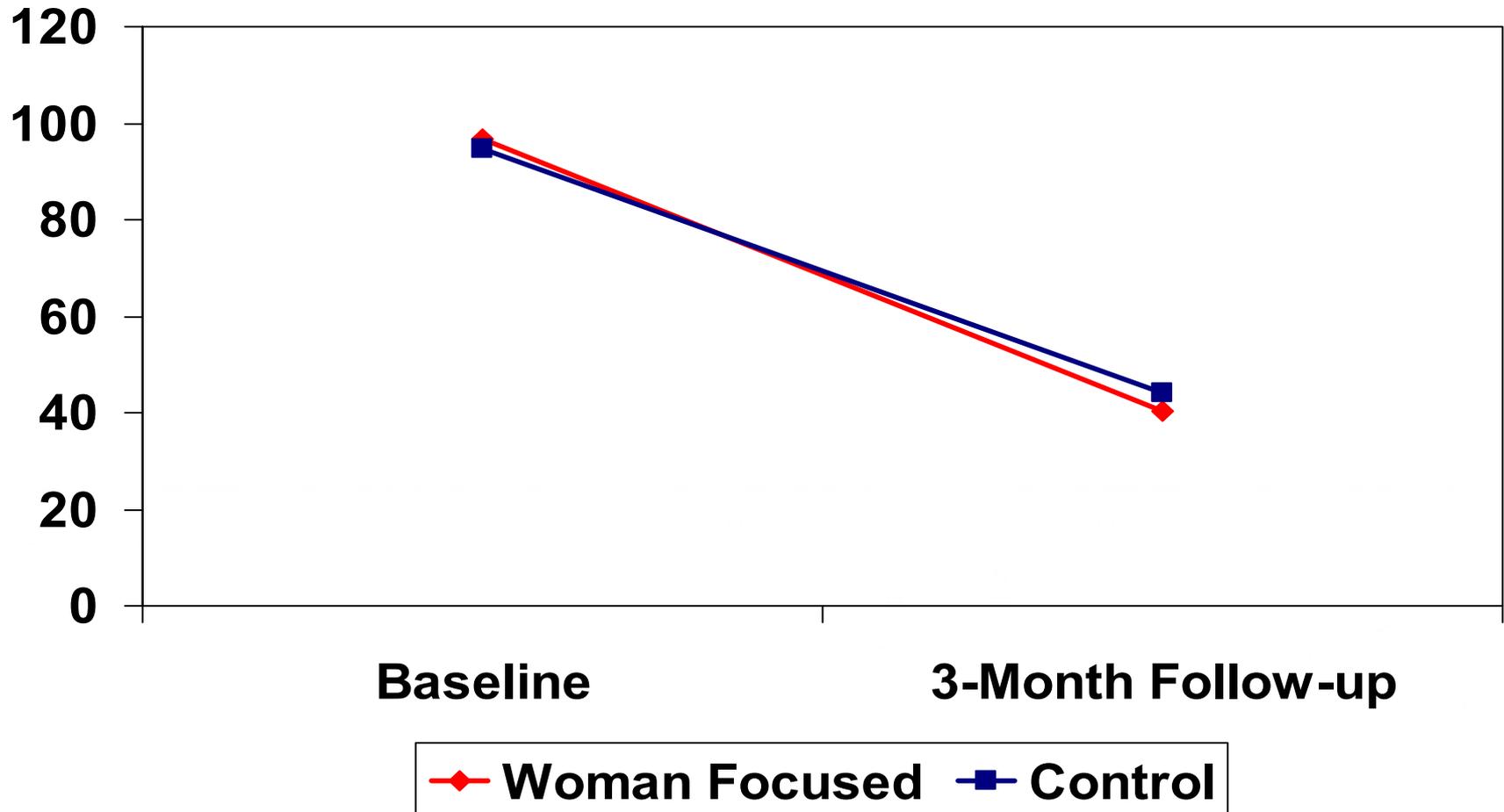
# Proportion of *Protected* Sex Acts with Main Partner (n=91)\*\*



\*\* p<.01; Data refer to previous 30 days



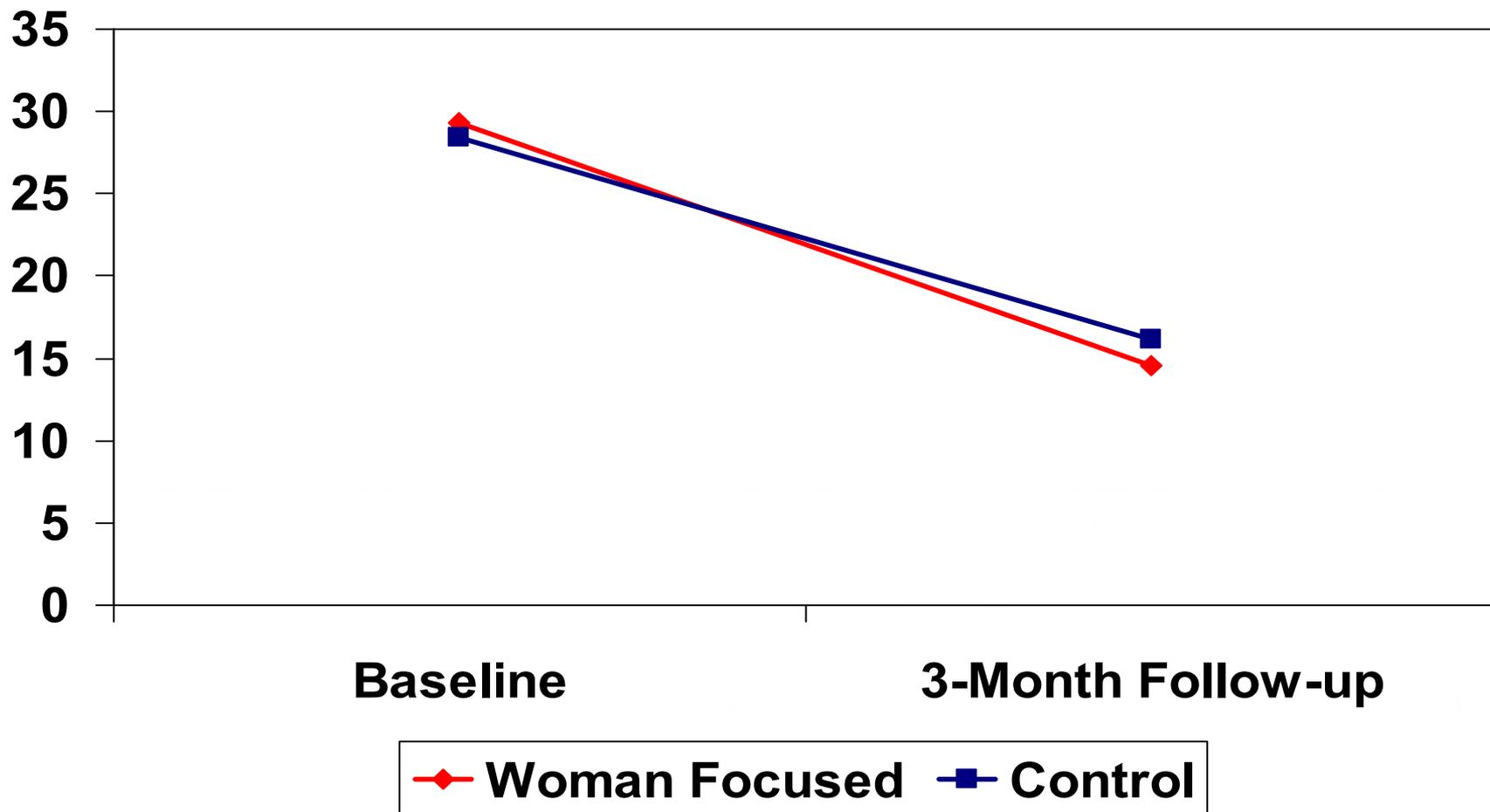
## Mean Number of *Injections* (n=91)



Note: Data refer to previous 30 days



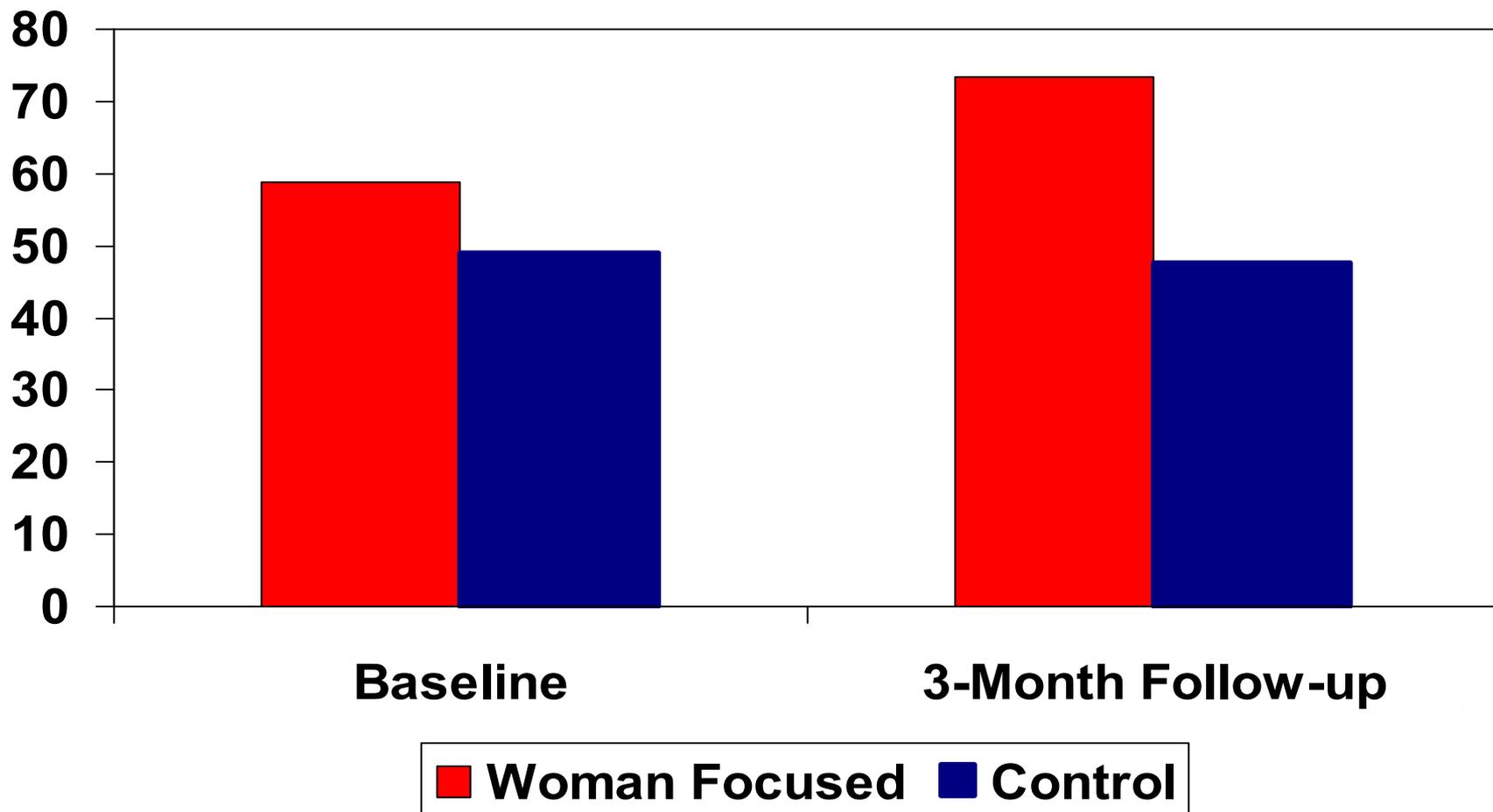
# Mean Number of *Days Used Heroin* (n=91)



Note: Data refer to previous 30 days



# Always Used Clean Works (n=91)<sup>\*\*\*</sup>



<sup>\*\*\*</sup> p<.001; Post-test data



# Implications

- **High level of HIV prevalence and use of dead-space syringes**, with high frequency of injecting
- **Evidence supports the woman-focused intervention** with regard to reducing unprotected sex acts and always using clean works
- **No difference found between the groups with regard to the large reductions in heroin use**; however, this may have been confounded by all women having been detoxed



## Implications (cont.)

- **Short-term detox is not the answer** because although women reduced drug use frequency, they did not stop drug use entirely
- **Overall, harm reduction was successful** for the woman-focused group (e.g., cleaning works and protected sex)



# Future Plans and Collaborations

- **Phase III Trial** with female IDUs across settings (E. Krupitsky et al.)
- **CFAR couples pilot study** (PI: O. Toussova) – Mentoring commitment
- **Adapting the Women’s CoOp to Sex Workers - ??**
- **Fellowship application:** Arina Tiurina
- **Support for legal treatment options for women** (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine)