



# Reduced Alcohol Use and Improved Wellness in Persons Living With HIV: The WELL Program

TF Ferguson, PhD; L McDaniel, PhD; MM Brashear, MPH; F Ernst, PsyD; PE Molina, MD, PhD

COMPREHENSIVE ALCOHOL-HIV/AIDS RESEARCH CENTER

<sup>1</sup>Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, New Orleans 70112

alcoholresearch.lsuhscc.edu

## Background

- HIV infection continues to disproportionately impact vulnerable populations including racial/ethnic minorities who are at greatest risk of comorbidities.
- People living with HIV (PLWH) have a 2-3 fold higher prevalence of alcohol use disorders (AUD), and approximately 8-12% are classified as heavy drinkers.
- Alcohol misuse can impact HIV disease through decreased adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and increased risk for comorbid conditions.

## Objectives

- Evaluate the impact of the evidence-based WELL (Wellness through Empowerment, Learning, and Living) Intervention Program on risky alcohol consumption and overall health and well-being in a population of PLWH under care.

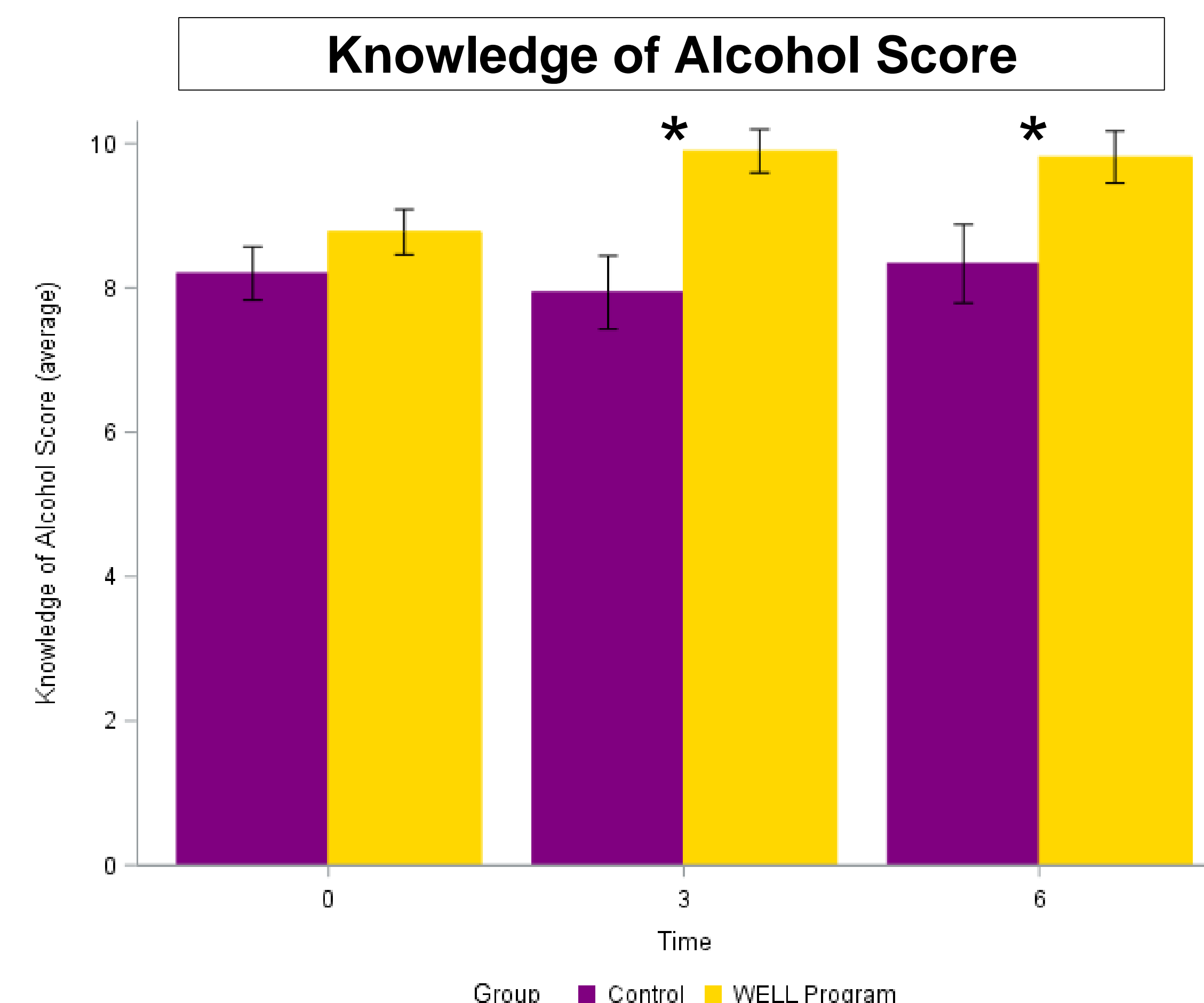
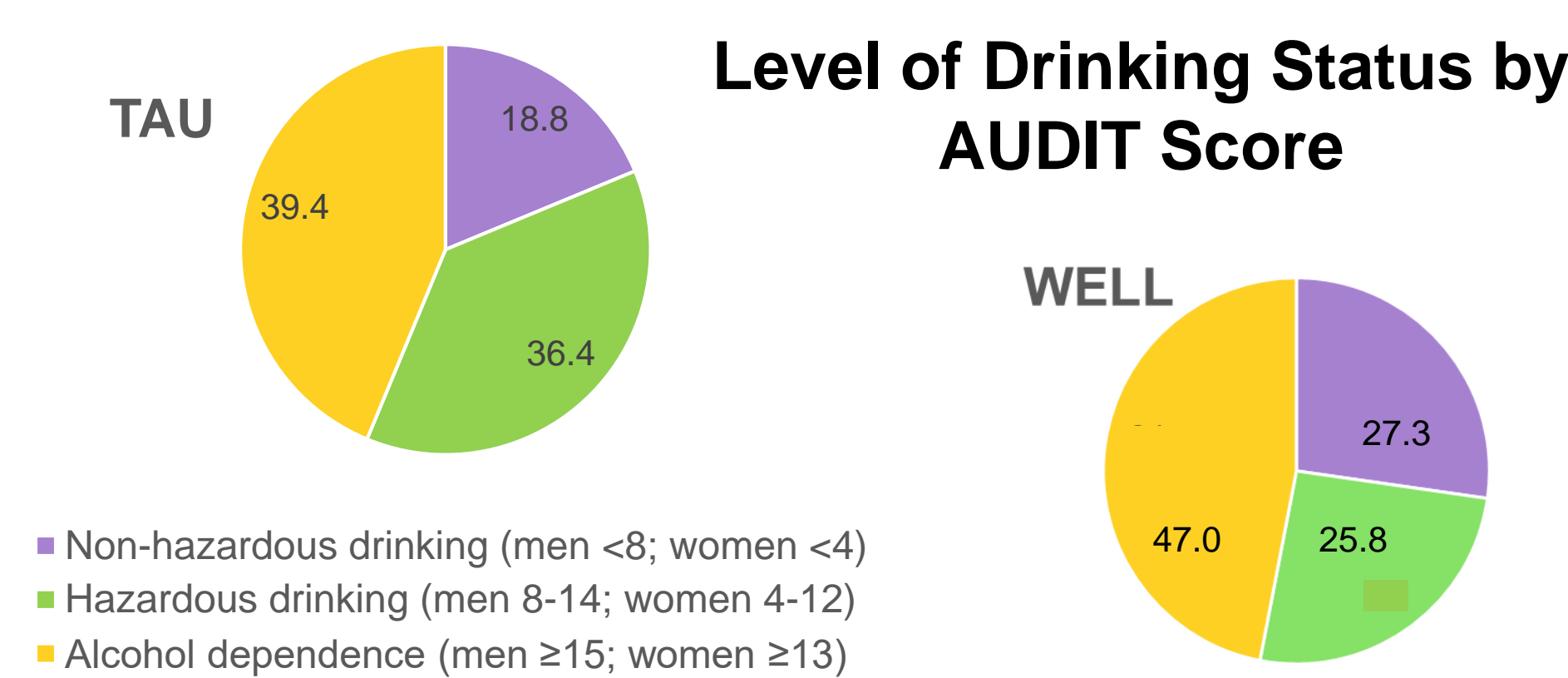
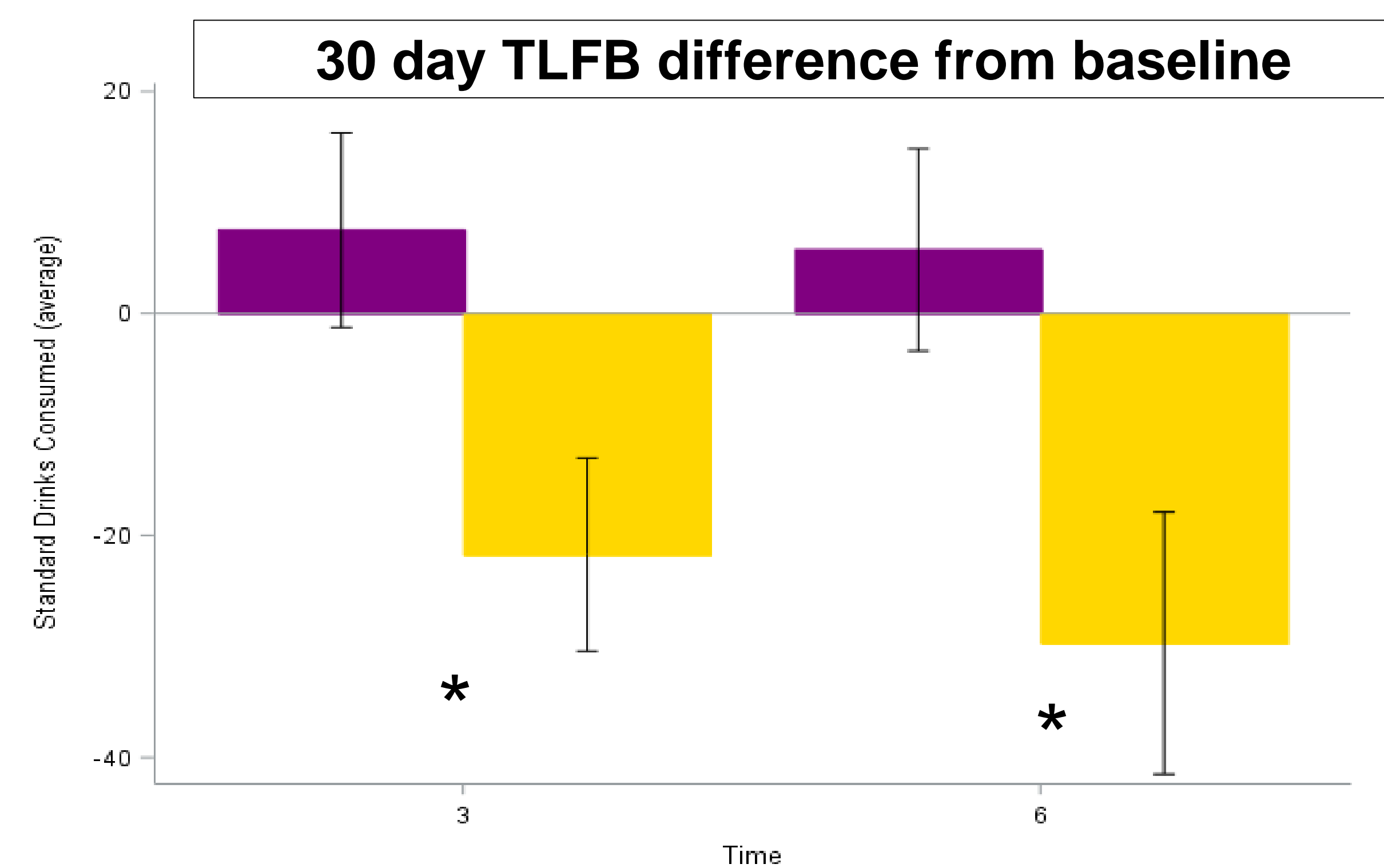
## Methods

- A total of 202 patients from the University Medical Center-New Orleans HIV Outpatient (HOP) Clinic were randomized to treatment as usual (TAU), n=102, or the Intervention (WELL), n=100.
  - Inclusion criteria:* Ages 18 and older, HIV positive, AUDIT-C score greater than 4-men/3-women, and that the person has had more than 6 drinks on one occasion.
  - Exclusion criteria:* a pending legal case.
- Data was collected on alcohol use, drug use, condom use, and treatment participation
- Data was collected at baseline, weekly during the intervention sessions, and at 3, 6, and 12 month follow-up visits.
- A repeated measures analysis with unstructured co-variance was used to analyze the effects of the intervention on behaviors and clinical outcomes.
- All analyses completed using SAS version 9.4.

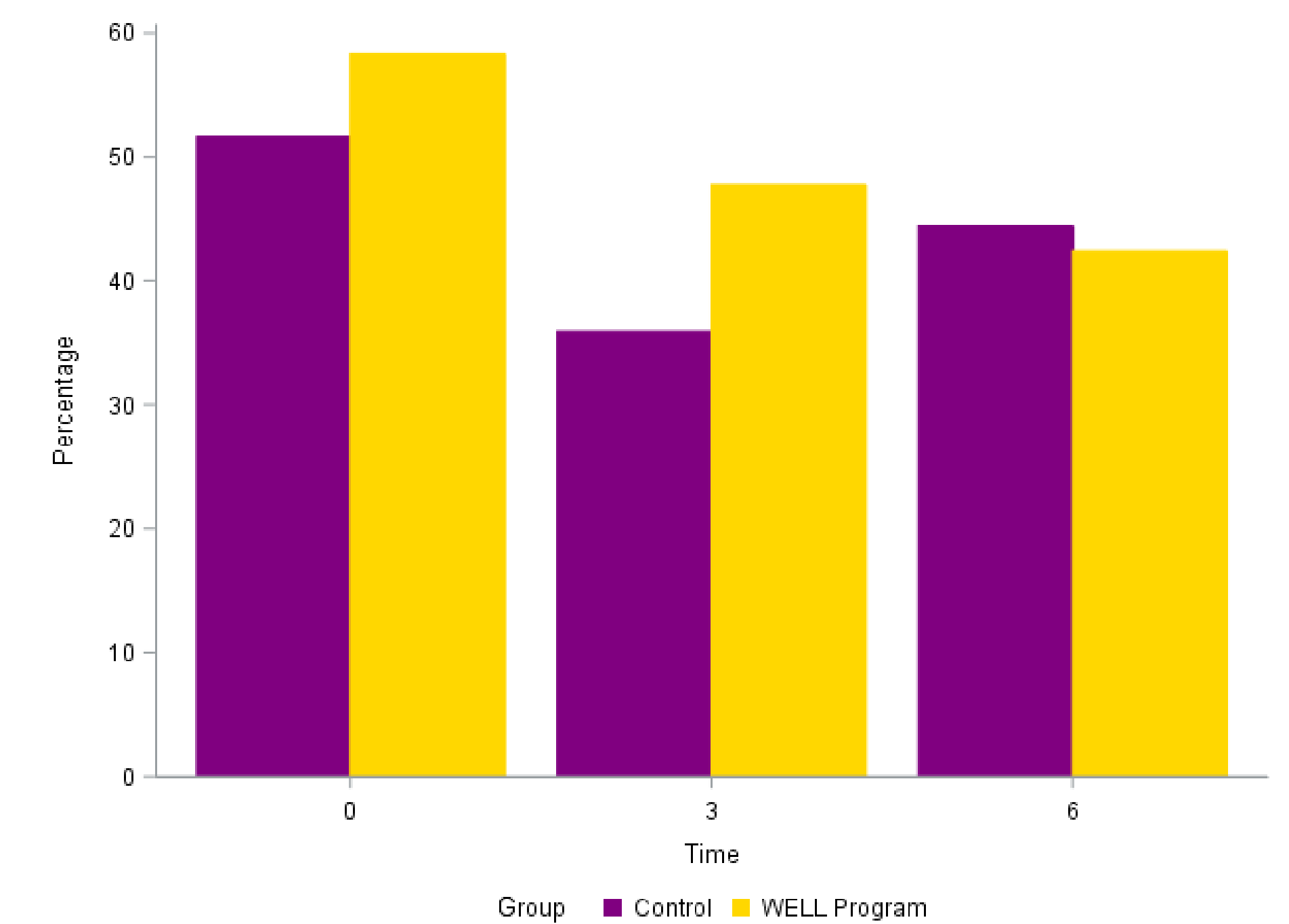
## Results

Overview of WELL Intervention Sessions	
Session topics	Objectives
1) Healthcare Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to be an active healthcare participant</li> <li>Learn consequences of ART non-adherence and strategies for overcoming barriers to adherence</li> </ul>
2) Reducing the Harm of Alcohol and Drug Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn standard drink amounts and identify problematic alcohol use</li> <li>Understand the harms of alcohol and drug use</li> <li>Learn alcohol harm reduction techniques</li> </ul>
3) Harm Reduction Using Latex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the harm of unsafe sexual practices</li> <li>Learn harm reduction techniques using latex</li> </ul>
4) Negotiating Harm Reduction with Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn condom negotiation and communication skills using didactic, visual, and role-play demonstrations</li> </ul>
5) Healthy Lifestyle Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn coping skills and stress management</li> <li>Improve knowledge regarding nutritional guidelines and food hygiene</li> </ul>

	Participant Characteristics (N=202)	
	TAU % (n=102)	WELL % (n=100)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	71.6	71.0
Female	25.5	29.0
Transgender	2.9	0
<b>Race</b>		
Black	79.4	77.0
White	17.7	19.0
Other	2.9	4.0
<b>Age, mean ± SD</b>	47.4 ± 9.9	48.8 ± 9.4
<b>Education</b>		
<12	35.3	37.0
12th Grade	44.1	45.0
13+ Grade	20.6	17.0
<b>Employment</b>		
Full-time	12.3	5
Part-time	15.4	3.0
Retired	1.5	4.0
On or Applying for disability benefits	50.0	67.0
Unemployed	20.6	21.0



## Low Medication Adherence



## Discussion

- WELL participants, on average, showed a decrease in the number of standard drinks consumed in the follow-up time period (p=0.02).
- WELL participants report an increase in knowledge regarding the impact of alcohol use on HIV from baseline. They also score significantly higher than the TAU participants at 3 months (p=0.001) and 6 months (p=0.02).
- Proportion of low ART adherence decreased among the WELL-participants.
- WELL participants lowered their reported sexual risk taking behaviors at follow-up compared to baseline.

## Conclusions

- These findings suggest that the WELL program is effective in improving healthy behavior and adaptive coping strategies that can lead to reduced alcohol use and improved health outcomes.
- The development of additional strategies to sustain these positive behavioral changes over time are a necessity.



Wellness through Empowerment · Learning · Living

## Acknowledgements

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For additional information, contact Dr. Tekeda Ferguson (tferg4@lsuhsc.edu)

