

Antenatal women's experiences of self-collected vaginal swabs and point of care testing for sexually transmitted infections in Papua New Guinea

Authors:

Vallely Lisa M,^{1,2} Nosi S,² Ofi P,² Mengi A,² Riddell MA,^{1,2} Bolnga JW,^{2,3} Pomat W,² Vallely AJ,^{1,2} Kelly-Hanku A,^{1,2}

¹ The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, ² Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, Papua New Guinea, ³ Madang Provincial Health Authority, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea

Background: The WANTAIM trial (2016-2022) was a cluster randomized cross over trial of point-of-care (POC) testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among 4528 antenatal women in Madang and East New Britain Provinces, Papua New Guinea. Participating women provided a self-collected vaginal swab that was tested for *Chlamydia trichomonas*, *Neisseria gonorrhoea*, and *Trichomonas vaginalis* using the GeneXpert platform (Cepheid) and bacterial vaginosis using BVBlue (Gryphus Diagnostics). In this presentation we report on acceptability of self-collection, point of care testing (POC) and STI treatment among WANTAIM participants.

Methods: A sub-set of 54 women enrolled into WANTAIM participated in a semi-structured interview. Women were drawn from across the nine antenatal clinics in the trial. Audio recordings were transcribed and where necessary translated in English and then stored, managed, and coded in NVivo. Analysis of qualitative data used deductive and inductive thematic analysis applying Sekhon, Cartwright and Francis' (2017) theoretical framework of acceptability key constructs of Affective Attitude, Burden, Intervention Coherence and Self-efficacy.

Results: Overall, women reported that self-collection of a vaginal swab for STI testing during pregnancy was acceptable, with women happy to receive the results the same day. While most women reported that they understood that the vaginal swab was to check for infections that may affect their pregnancy, some were unsure what particular infections they were being tested for specifically and, in some cases what they had been treated for. Only few women reported negatively about long days at the antenatal clinic while they waited for their test results.

Conclusion: Antenatal POC STI testing was acceptable among women in this setting. Reducing waiting times between self-collection and communication of test result would enhance acceptance from the women's perspective.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: We disclose we have no conflicts of interest.