

EXPERIENCES OF USING AN ONLINE HIV SELF-TESTING (HIVST) DISSEMINATION SERVICE IN QUEENSLAND

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Background:

HIV self-testing (HIVST) is an accepted strategy to increase HIV testing and detection rates. This study evaluated a pilot online HIVST dissemination model, integrated into an existing peer-led rapid HIV testing service, with the aim of increasing access to supported HIVST, particularly previous non-testers and regional living Queenslanders.

Methods:

Evaluation data were collected at four time-points: 1) on ordering a kit, participants provided demographics, HIV testing, and pre-test information preference data (written kit information* +/- verbal from a peer testing-facilitator before kit mailout); 2) at two-weeks post mailout, a peer worker telephoned participants to ascertain test results and linkage-to-care. Testing experience was explored via 3) on-line post-test survey and 4) semi-structured phone interview. Descriptive and thematic analysis were conducted.

Results:

Between 1/10/2016 to 17/4/2018, 927 kits were ordered by 794 participants: 44.7% never-testers, 38.4% lived regionally and 10.2% Medicare ineligible. Only 4.9% (39/794) requested verbal pre-test information. The one reactive test reported had self-linked to care by 2-week peer follow-up. Majority (95.5%, 236/247) of post-test survey respondents were satisfied with their overall experience, 96.8% (239/247) found the written instructions for use easy to follow, 98% (242) oral sampling easy and 59.5% (147) preferred HIVST to clinic-based testing. Interviewees (n=16) agreed HIVST was convenient "*it's easy, rather than having to make time*". Pre-test information was considered important but face-to-face wasn't necessary with "*clear and easy-to-follow*" kit information. Importance and preference for post-test conversation emerged "*Just send me the test and call me afterwards*" particularly peers contact "*I trust [peers]... their concern for the community is genuine*". Many considered HIVST would have "*no effect on testing frequency or type used...HIVST's a backup*"

Conclusion:

On-line HIVST dissemination was an acceptable addition to the suite of HIV testing options if supported by clear instructions and the opportunity to talk with peers as desired particularly post-test.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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*Note: Study Kit information leaflet has been added to the World Health Organisation HIVST Implementation Toolkit.