HIV DRIED BLOOD SPOT TEST: INTERNET BASED SELF-SAMPLING INCREASES ACCESS TO HIV TESTING.

Macnulty A[1]

[1]NSW Sexual Health Infolink

Background: The *NSW HIV Strategy 2016-2020* identifies gay and other men who have sex with men (MSM) and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as two of the priority populations where increasing access to HIV testing should be targeted. HIV Dried Blood Spot research pilot project targets these groups using an internet based method of HIV testing by self-collection. Participants register online via a website, receive a postal HIV test kit, and perform a finger prick test. Five dried blood spots on a testing card are analysed for HIV antibody by a laboratory. Results are provided by a nurse-led phone service via SMS or telephone.

Analysis: A 6 month retrospective review was performed, analysing data provided by those registering on the website.

Results: Between 1st December 2016 and 31st May 2017, there were 192 registrations. Of these, 179 (93%) were men. One hundred and forty two (63%) participants identified as MSM. Thirty-three (15%) participants were from Asia or Africa and 48 (21%) had sexual partners from Asia or Africa. Ninety three (48%) participants were aged 20-29 years. One hundred and ten (57%) participants had never tested for HIV before or had not tested in the last 2 years. Respondents were more likely to answer questions related to past injecting drug use than they were to report number and gender of partners (2% vs 17%). There were no invalid or positive HIV antibody results. The return rate of kits from registration to the laboratory was 45%.

Conclusions: Internet based self-collected HIV testing has increased access to young, gay and homosexually active men who have not tested for HIV before or who test infrequently. Increasing access to people from CALD communities, in particular women needs further targeted promotion. Questions related to sexual behaviour were under reported.

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