

QUICK PRICK AT THE PARK – TAKING TESTING TO THE BEATS

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Background/Purpose:

In 2016, 110 people contracted HIV in New Zealand. Of these, 89% were men who have sex with men (MSM). The New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF) has a goal of reducing the amount of undiagnosed HIV among MSM and piloted a Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) for 9 weeks from 29 January 2018. The specific goals of the pilot were to increase both the volume and frequency of testing among MSM and to do so in a way that is more accessible than the traditional clinic setting. Outdoor cruising areas (beats) were considered an important location to include in the MTU schedule.

Approach:

The MTU was a purposely-fit testing van that parked near 3 popular Auckland beats on 5 different occasions. The van operated with one peer tester, one Community Engagement team member and one support staff member. The INSTI HIV-1/HIV-2-Syphilis Antibody test was used producing results in 60 seconds. A combination of direct in-person engagement and live Grindr interactions were used to encourage individuals in the vicinity to access the MTU.

Outcomes/Impact:

Eighteen individuals were tested. Of these, 55% had had their last HIV test more than a year ago and 27% had never tested. While 88% self-identified as gay or bisexual, 11% identified as heterosexual. Māori or Pacific ethnic identity was declared by 33%, followed by 38% identifying as Asian, 16% Pakeha New Zealand, 6% European and 5% Latin American.

Innovation and Significance:

Introducing a community-based HIV testing service to Auckland beats improved access for MSM who had irregularly or never tested for HIV. Testing within the clients' own and familiar environment facilitated normalisation of the testing process and engagement with the community, especially MSM traditionally underserved by NZAF because they do not identify as belonging to the LGBT community. The use of live Grindr communications increased the number of clients accessing the service.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

The NZAF is funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Health and no pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this initiative.