

REDUCING UNDIAGNOSED HIV IN NEW ZEALAND THROUGH SELF-TESTING

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Background/Purpose:

Reducing rates of undiagnosed HIV in New Zealand is a core strategic goal for the New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF). HIV self-testing (HST) was identified as a tool that might assist. We wanted to know whether provision of an HST option would improve testing outcomes for non-recent testers, those in regional New Zealand, indigenous Māori and New Zealand based Africans. A pilot project was developed to assess uptake, use, acceptability and follow-up to care.

Approach:

The service was soft launched by adding it as an additional option for those searching for a testing service on the NZAF website. Following identity verification through an SMS code, clients were sent a kit including a testing device, printed instructions, educational materials and links to an online instruction video.

Clients had the option of a pre-test call with a peer educator. They were sent regular SMS reminders to report back results and were contacted for follow-up after 28 days if they had not done so.

Outcomes/Impact:

448 tests were shipped, half of which were sent outside main centres. 88% of the clients identified as gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men (GBM) and 82% of these reported non-recent testing. 69% had reported back their results after 28 days, five of which were preliminary positives (two from small towns and three in main centres). The proportion of clients who identified as Māori or African was 8.7% and 3.6% respectively (4.5% and 1.3% respectively when compared with in-clinic testing data).

Innovation and Significance:

HST increased HIV testing among populations underserved by NZAF clinics. Five preliminary positives from 448 tests suggests that the service reached the right people. With investment, HST could be scaled-up and play a key role in reducing undiagnosed HIV in New Zealand.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

No interests to disclose