

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF DIFFERENT HIV SELF-TESTING MODALITIES FOR ACHIEVING NEW ZEALAND'S HIV ELIMINATION GOALS

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Background/Purpose:

The HIV epidemic in New Zealand disproportionately impacts men who have sex with men (MSM). Playing a pivotal role in HIV prevention among MSM, Burnett Foundation Aotearoa (BFA) spearheads innovative approaches to HIV testing, contributing to the UNAIDS target of ensuring that 95% of people living with HIV are aware of their status.

Approach:

In 2017 BFA broadened its HIV testing services through self-testing modalities in addition to centre-based and outreach tests. This includes delivery of free HIV self-tests through vending machines and tablets at sex-on-site venues, and via ordering online, to enhance accessibility and convenience. To reduce barriers, there is minimal data collection – name (or nickname), ethnicity, date of birth, last HIV test date, and a mobile number or email for verification and linking to necessary care.

Outcomes/Impact:

In 2023, a total of 6,835 HIV tests were delivered. Over 60% of these tests were distributed through self-testing platforms. People reporting Asian ethnicity comprised the second-largest group, constituting almost 29% of those accessing self-tests (a rise from 24% in 2022), following New Zealand Europeans at 41%. Furthermore, 21% of self-tests were accessed by people who tested 5 or more years ago and had never been tested for HIV, representing an increase from the 18% reported in 2022.

Innovation and Significance:

HIV self-tests effectively engage first-time testers. Implementing innovative modalities, such as distributing HIV tests at sex on-site venues, has proven successful in reaching diverse ethnicities in New Zealand. We will expand self-test initiatives through innovative modalities, including partnering with Grindr, to further reach MSM at risk. We are committed to actively listening to community voices, conducting thorough monitoring and evaluation of new modalities, and making improvements as necessary. We will prioritise the importance of peer support in aiding and linking individuals to essential care for HIV self-testing, both within and beyond the scope of the BFA.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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