

HIV SELF-TESTING AMONG GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

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Background/Purpose:

HIV transmission in New Zealand is concentrated among gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men (GBM) and migrant communities. In 2017, GBM accounted for 91% of HIV notifications where infection was considered locally acquired.

HIV self-testing (HST) was identified as a tool to address barriers to testing for typically hard to reach GBM, including indigenous Māori and other ethnic minorities, those in rural areas, and African migrants. An HST pilot project was conducted with 500 HST kits, seeking to study utilization, acceptability, and pre- and post-test health seeking behaviours.

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.

Two SMS reminders to report results are sent to clients. If no results are reported at 28-days after shipment, a peer educator attempts to contact the client.

Outcomes/Impact:

498 tests were shipped between December 2017 and June 2018, 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 81% 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 498 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:

No interests to disclose.