

AUSTRALIAN FIRST VIRTUAL HIV TESTING SERVICE: INNOVATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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Background/Purpose:

Restricted movement, redeployment of frontline workers and other measures implemented in response to COVID-19 reduced access to asymptomatic HIV testing in NSW. Routine testing for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) is a cornerstone of the HIV response and access is crucial.

In response, ACON launched a new contactless testing service – you[TEST]. Leveraging years of experience delivering community-based testing, this virtual peer-led service facilitates access to self-testing options for NSW GBMSM, supported by wraparound services and linkage to care.

Approach:

Compliant with TGA requirements and NSW policy guidance, you[TEST] utilises trained and credentialed a[TEST] peers to deliver HIV education around HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, PEP, undetectable viral load and testing guidelines.

you[TEST] offers two self-testing kits and both kits are explained. After selecting their preferred kit, the peer demonstrates how to perform that test. The outcomes of each test are explained, along with window period advice. Referral information is provided and follow up contacts give opportunities to ask questions about the testing experience.

Outcomes/Impact:

Over x weeks, 78 clients registered for you[TEST]. 100% of clients were 'very satisfied' with their experience of you[TEST] and the virtual peer conversation. 91% of clients were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the usability of the test. 72% of clients were contacted via phone post-consultation with 85% of these clients stating no further support was needed.

Innovation and Significance:

you[TEST] is an example of innovation, person centred service provision during COVID-19. Early figures demonstrate that you[TEST] is popular, including in regional areas of NSW.

Extremely high client satisfaction for the you[TEST] service indicates some preference from GBMSM for this type of service. This service holds promise for the delivery of HIV services and health promotion where virtual models may be preferred.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

ACON has no conflict of interests to declare.