

CAN WE REMIND BETTER? EXPLORING THE USE OF “NUDGES” TO IMPROVE HIV AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION TESTING AMONG MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

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Background:

Behavioral economics and its applied branch “nudging” can improve individual choices in a variety of health care settings. However, there is paucity of research using nudges to improve regular testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The study examined which reminder system and message type that gay men preferred to remind them to undergo regular HIV and STI testing.

Methods:

A cross-sectional survey study was conducted among gay men attending a sexual health clinic in Melbourne, Australia between 13th January to 5th March 2020 exploring preferred method of reminder and message type. Descriptive statistics and logistic regression were used to analyze the data.

Results:

A total of 309 responses were received. The majority of the participants (90%) preferred SMS as the reminder method for HIV and STI testing compared to other types (e.g. email or instant messaging). More than a third of the participants (45%) showed preference for a neutrally framed reminder message [Your next check-up is now due. Please phone for an appointment], whilst one-third (35%) preferred a personalized message [Hi (first name), you are due for your next check-up. Please phone for an appointment]. Younger men were more likely to favor positively framed and personalized reminder messages ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion:

SMS was the most preferred reminder method for regular HIV/STI testing. The findings suggest both neutrally framed and personalized messages are likely to be effective when applied to the whole population and we would recommend using them as a reminder message.

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