

ONLINE HIV SELF-TESTING (HIVST) SERVICE IN QUEENSLAND: USERS, USAGE AND USABILITY

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Background:

New HIV infections in Australian gay and bisexual men are progressively attributed to undiagnosed HIV. This study piloted an integrated model of online-ordered HIV self-tests (HIVST), hosted by a peer-led People Living With HIV (PLHIV) community organisation, to increase access to HIV testing among non and infrequent testers.

Methods:

Recruitment strategies were designed to engage men who have sex with men (MSM) with sub-optimal HIV testing history and/or living outside major Queensland cities. Participants demographics, HIV testing history and other factors were collected. Participants chose whether to accept verbal pre-test information prior to mailing the HIVST. A two-week follow-up telephone call ascertained test result and participants consent to a follow-up testing experience survey. Univariate, bivariate and multivariable analyses were performed.

Results:

From 1/10/2016 to 17/04/2018, 794 participants ordered 927 HIVST kits. Participants identified as having no previous HIV test (44.7%), MSM (62.2%), living outside a major Queensland city (38.4%), earning <\$50,000/annum (59.1%), without a Medicare card (10.2%) and aged 20-29 years (47.8%). Of first orders, thirty-nine (4.9%) participants chose to engage with peer test facilitators pre-test, with previous HIV testing being significantly associated with engagement (Fisher's Exact Test (FET)=0.046). Having not previously tested for HIV was significantly associated with "not testing elsewhere if HIVST was not available" (FET=0.007). Generalized linear modelling indicated identifying as MSM a significant predictor for repeat ordering (Wald=6.139, p=0.013). Previous HIV testing and living outside a major Queensland city were not significant.

Conclusion:

The study identified online access to HIVST as an important addition to the existing suite of testing options in Queensland, particularly for those who have never tested or who would not test through other methods. This model of HIVST distribution, hosted by a peer PLHIV community organisation, ameliorates psychosocial, financial and geographical barriers to HIV testing whilst providing support if wanted.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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