

Optimizing HIV and STI testing services for men who have sex with men in high-income countries: A Systematic Review.

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Background

Although there are declines in overall HIV notifications in some high-income countries, men who have sex with men (MSM) are still an at-risk group. To encourage regular use of HIV/STI testing and treatment services for MSM, we aimed to review the literature to summarize the attributes of a HIV/STI testing service that MSM prefer.

Method

We conducted a systematic review by using PubMed, EMBASE, PsychINFO and CINAHL in January 2020. Titles and abstracts were independently screened by two reviewers and any discrepancies resolved by a third reviewer. Studies with primary data on preferences of HIV/STI testing services of MSM in high-income countries were included. We extracted data on the service attributes that MSM preferred, and summarized these thematically.

Results

In total, 1464 publications were identified from the search, 219 full texts were read and 56 were included in the final analysis. We categorised data using a social-ecological model, and found 20 papers addressing 'individual' factors, 50 papers addressing 'service-level' factors and 17 papers addressing 'societal' factors. Key themes of preferences for HIV/STI testing services were: 1) the appeal of self-testing; 2) the need to provide a variety of testing options; and 3) the influence of the testing experience including confidentiality and privacy, tester characteristics and stigma. There were also distinct patterns of preferences for subpopulations of MSM across studies, such as the preference of self-testing for young MSM, and of in-clinic testing for those who perceived themselves as high-risk (i.e. symptomatic or exposed to a partner with known infection).

Conclusion

To optimise HIV/STI testing services for MSM, it is important to address 'individual', 'service-level' and 'societal' factors, such as enhancing the convenience of testing, and providing a service where men feel comfortable and safe accessing. Furthermore, services should accommodate the preferences of diverse sub-populations within the MSM community.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

All authors declare no conflicts of interests.