

Reaching Those That Are Not Testing

Awareness, Barriers and Benefits, and Acceptability of a Home Oral HIV Self-Test among an Online Sample of New Zealand MSM

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Background

In 2016, 26% of locally-acquired HIV diagnoses among men who have sex with men (MSM) had a CD4 count <350 at diagnosis. In 2017, 29% of sexually active MSM online survey respondents reported having never tested for HIV or not testing in the last three years.

The New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF) are exploring HIV self-testing (HST) technology to reduce the number non-recent HIV testers and undiagnosed HIV infections in New Zealand. In conjunction with an HST pilot project, questions were included in online behavioural surveys to investigate HST acceptability among non-recent testers.

Methods

Upon completion of an HIV testing social marketing campaign in December 2017, the NZAF launched an online behavioural survey. Recruitment occurred over five weeks, targeting MSM through banner advertisements and pop-up messages on dating apps and social media.

Questions specific to HST included: awareness, perceived benefits and barriers, and acceptability if offered for free or at cost.

The study was reviewed by the New Zealand Ethics Committee, which has agreed that it meets the appropriate ethical standards for social research. Application: NZEC 2016_21.

Results

Of the 1,044 sexually active MSM participants recruited, 270 (26%) identified as male, reported non-recent testing for HIV (never testing or testing three or more years ago), and had sex with a man in the previous six months.

Of these men, 43% report at least one condomless sexual male partner in the last six months, 30% would prefer a home HST for their next HIV test (Figure 1), and 88% were not aware or unsure there was an HST available.

Figure 2 shows that if fully funded, 94% would consider using HST, compared to 71% at cost price.

Among those men reporting they would use HST under either price condition, the top perceived benefit would be not having to go to a clinic (Figure 3). Among those men reporting that they would not use or were unsure about the HST under either condition, the top perceived barrier was price (Figure 3).

No significant differences were found in preference or acceptability by age.

Conclusion

HST offers an acceptable form of testing that NZAF can capitalize on to potentially reduce undiagnosed HIV infections by raising awareness, highlighting its benefits and reducing potential barriers among MSM who are not being reached through current testing channels.

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Figure 1. Preferred Place of Next HIV Test

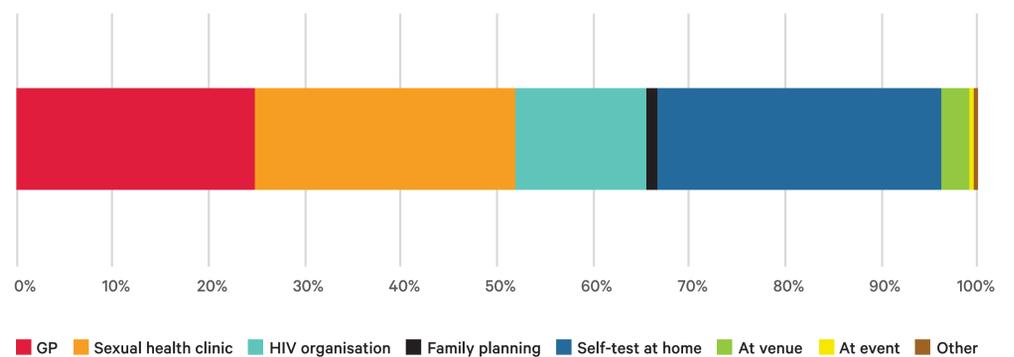


Figure 2. Acceptability of HST Under Two Price Conditions

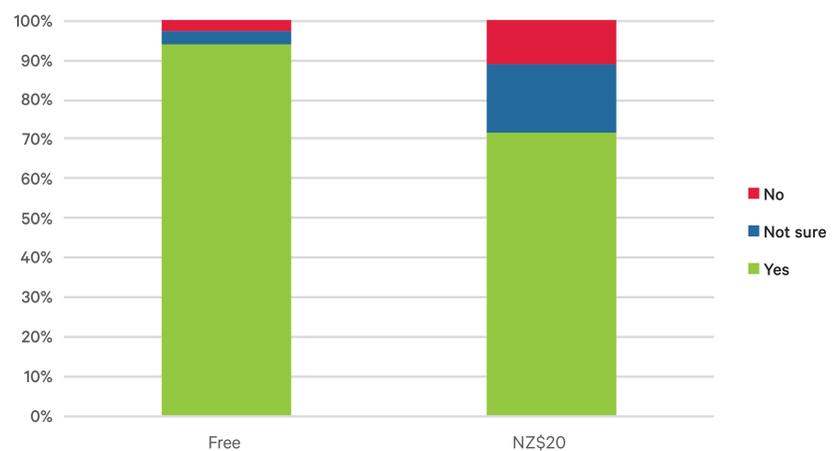
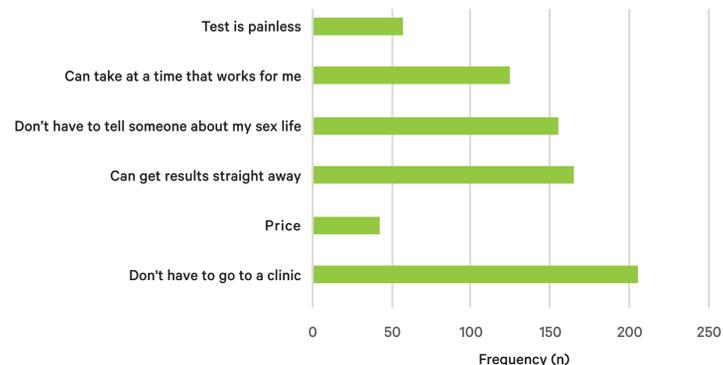


Figure 3. Top Three Perceived Benefits of, and Barriers to, HST

Top Three Perceived Benefits of HST



Top Three Perceived Barriers to HST

