

HIV Testing and African Communities: Policy and Practice


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Outline

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- About the HIV testing project
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“Having an HIV test when I was pregnant meant I could plan my future – and my baby’s.”

All expectant mothers wish for a healthy baby. So if you're pregnant it's important to know your HIV status. The risk of passing HIV from mother to baby can be reduced to as low as 1%. Testing is offered to all pregnant women as part of routine health checks.

For more information call African Aids Helpline:
0800 0967 500

It's better to know

For advice on living with HIV call
THT DIRECT HELPLINE  **0845 12 21 200**

NAHIP  **NHS**

About the AHPN

- Established in 1996
- Membership-based organisation (African community-based organisations)
- Policy and campaigning at national level
- Key policy areas include HIV testing, access to HIV treatment and stigma and discrimination
- Project areas: policy, prevention, capacity-building and information
- Manage the National African HIV Prevention Programme (NAHIP)

About the HIV testing project

- NAHIP's 'It's Better to Know' campaign
 - Informing people about the benefits of HIV testing
 - Involves information resources, outreach and workshops
 - Process evaluated by University College London





About the HIV testing project (2)

- In April and August we held two expert seminar meetings
 - Aim of developing a strategy to increase HIV testing within African communities
 - About 30 participants with a range of expertise
 - Reaching those with undiagnosed HIV infection (in 2005, 5400 African people)
 - Discussions on research, policy and current initiatives

Discussion points



Testing practices increasing the number of African people with undiagnosed HIV coming forward for testing

- Antenatal testing
- Rapid testing in the GUM setting
- Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) ie. CHAT, AHEAD, Know 4 Sure
- Health promotion campaigns ie. 'It's Better to Know'

Discussion points (2)



What are discouraging African people with undiagnosed HIV infection from testing?

- Lack of knowledge about HIV testing services
- Issues of confidentiality
- Social and cultural barriers
- HIV stigma within communities

Discussion points (3)



What are some of the structural barriers to increasing the uptake and availability of HIV testing among African communities?

- Where to test
- Who is doing the testing
- Funding constraints
- Political and policy environment/ messaging



Country visits

- Identify HIV testing models in different settings and document lessons that are applicable to the UK situation
- US, Ghana, Malawi and South Africa
- Different perspectives - social research, clinical and policy
- Research will inform HIV testing strategies and policies in the UK



Questions

- Is it possible to inform African people of the benefits of testing for HIV, given that they may not be able to access free HIV treatment?
- What specific criteria need to be in place prior to the rollout of community-based initiatives?
- Where can funding for local HIV testing initiatives come from?
- How effective are community mobilisation efforts to promote HIV testing?
- What are the views and attitudes of GPs in relation to HIV testing? What are their HIV information and training needs?
- How can we explore whether those who use rapid HIV testing in GUM or VCT settings would not otherwise have tested for HIV?
- To what extent do African people in the UK use or would want to take advantage of home sampling kits?



Implications for us today



- Raise questions with researchers
- Share experiences and perspectives of HIV testing initiatives and outreach - good practice, challenges
- Learn about research that is taking place, what it means for you where you work, and how you might be able to inform the work or to get involved

Thank you

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