

Socio-Peer Attitudes on HIV Testing and Patient Perceptions of an Emergency Department HIV Testing Program – A Qualitative Study

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BACKGROUND

- Emergency departments (EDs) are key venues for HIV testing given the populations they serve.
- The health behaviors and attitudes of individuals' peers are thought to influence individuals' health, as seen with obesity, for example.
- No study has explored socio-peer attitudes on HIV testing as it relates to HIV test acceptance by patients and their friends.

OBJECTIVE

- To assess ED patients' perceptions of their friends' attitudes on HIV testing.
- To compare socio-peer attitudes to patients' history of HIV testing and personal reasons for accepting or declining test offers.

METHODS

- An urban academic adult ED (JHH ED) with a long standing HIV testing program offering patients free point-of-care or blood-based HIV tests. Patients are offered an HIV test by a nurse during triage or by testing staff at bedside.
- JHH ED serves a diverse and mostly socioeconomically disadvantaged population.

Study Design

- We conducted in-depth interviews with patients during their visit to the JHH ED from November 2013 through June 2014.
- Patients were enrolled with the aim of sampling a population representative of the ED patient population in terms of age-group, gender and race distribution. HIV positive status was intentionally oversampled, with a goal of 20 HIV positive patients and 60 HIV negative patients. Enrolled patients were asked to comment on their experience of being offered HIV tests and on their friends' attitudes on HIV testing.
- Interviews were transcribed by the interviewer (AA). Two reviewers (AA and CW) reviewed transcripts to identify themes. Themes were revised several times through discussion between the two reviewers and principle investigator (Y-HH). The two reviewers independently applied themes to each response and discrepancies were resolved through consensus.
- Chi-square tests were performed comparing socioeconomic factors to distribution of themes. Zip codes were grouped by neighborhood proximity to the ED: Near JHH ED (21202, 21205, 21213, 21231, 21224), other Baltimore City (other 212xx), and non-Baltimore City (other zip codes).

RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of 86 patients

Characteristic	Categories	Number	(%)
HIV Status	HIV negative (self-reported)	64	74
	HIV positive	22	26
Age (yrs)	Mean (SD)	40 ± 11.3	
Gender	Female	45	52
	Black	69	80
Race	White	15	17
	Other	2	2
Sexuality	Heterosexual	78	91
	MSM	6	7
Bisexual women		1	1
	Unsure	1	1
Drug use	Injection drug use (ever)	7	8
	Grade 12 or less	40	47
Education level	HS grad or GED	16	19
	Some college	15	17
	College or graduate degree	15	17

Figure 1. HIV tests done in the last year, n=64

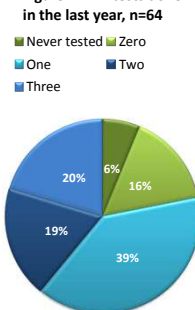
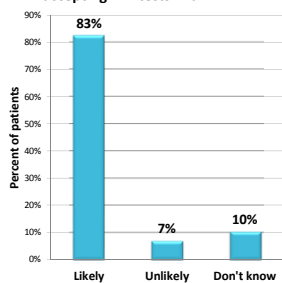


Figure 2. Friends' likelihood of accepting HIV tests in an ED



Patients who thought friends are likely to accept said:

They'll get it done...you can't be too safe

They would get it...I'm guessing because umm...because they're having sex...You gotta make sure.

They're good about it...because everybody should know their status.

A patient who thought friends are unlikely to accept said:

Not something anyone wants to think about...Don't think anyone wants to live with HIV.

A patient who didn't know if friends would accept said:

Not sure...everybody likes their privacy.

RESULTS

Figure 3. Peer attitudes on HIV testing in general

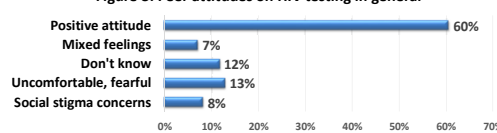
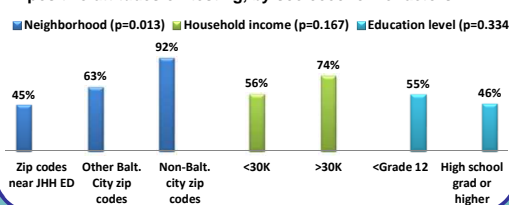


Table 2. Likelihood of friends accepting HIV tests in an ED compared to friends' attitudes on HIV testing in general, based on patients' perception

Friends' likelihood	Friends' attitudes on HIV testing	Total	%	Relevant text
Likely, n=71	Positive attitude	46	65%	<i>They would get it...I'm guessing because umm...because they're having sex...You gotta make sure.</i>
	Mixed feelings	3	4%	<i>Some care, some don't.</i>
	Don't know	7	10%	<i>I don't know...it's a terminal illness.</i>
	Uncomfortable, fearful	8	11%	<i>Scared of it...because you never know, anything can happen.</i>
	Social stigma concerns	7	10%	<i>Secretive about it...worried about what people will say.</i>
Unlikely, n=6	Positive attitude	2	33%	<i>They're ok with it...[unlikely to test because] we're all old people...[testing is a] good way to rule out a disease.</i>
	Mixed feelings	1	17%	<i>Some are with it, some are afraid...cause it's HIV.</i>
	Don't know	1	17%	<i>Never came up.</i>
Don't know, n=9	Positive attitude	4	44%	<i>Generally, they're for it.</i>
	Mixed feelings	2	22%	<i>Don't think they want AIDS...[They get tested] to know whether or not they have it.</i>
	Don't know	2	22%	<i>Not sure...cause we don't talk.</i>
	Uncomfortable, fearful	1	11%	<i>Not something anyone wants to think about.</i>

Figure 4. Percent of patients who thought their friends had positive attitudes on testing, by socioeconomic factors



RESULTS

Patients' response to HIV test offer during ED visit, n=38

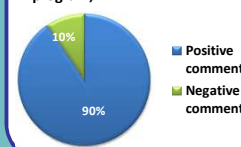
Patient reason for accepting: *Just to make sure I'm safe...If I'm HIV positive, I don't want to give it to nobody else.*

Patients' reasons for declining: *Cause I just had one done. (50% who declined said they were recently tested)*
I mean I don't have a need for it. My husband and I have been together 16 years.

Table 3. Patients response to test offer during ED visit and testing history

Response to test offer, n=38 (63%)	Testing history	Total
Accepted, n=24 (63%)	Tested in the last year	21
	Tested over 1 year ago	3
Declined, n=14 (37%)	Never been tested	0
	Tested in the last year	12
	Tested over 1 year ago	0
	Never been tested	2

Figure 5. Patient comments on the JHH ED testing program, n=21



Positive comments on the program: *It's like everybody else's, they just ask you... They don't hassle...no twisting your arm about it...It's up to you.*

I think it's ok. I think they ask you in the right way. When you first come in.

Negative Comments: *It was a little uncomfortable but it's fine.*
Oooh she just came up outta the blue...

LIMITATIONS

- Patients may not have disclosed accurate information due to the sensitive nature of interview questions.
- A few of the interviews were conducted with patients' friends or family present which may have influenced their responses.
- The ED testing program is long standing which may make the ED population more familiar with testing than other urban ED populations.

CONCLUSIONS

- Patients believed that their friends were likely to accept testing in an ED (83%) and had positive attitudes on HIV testing in general (60%).
- Most patients offered a test in the ED accepted (63%) or indicated that they were recently tested (18%) and patients had mostly positive comments on the testing program (90%).
- Results suggest that ED-based HIV testing is acceptable to urban patients and their peers.
- Future studies could explore interventions utilizing peer networks to address concerns about HIV testing and increase testing acceptance.

FUNDING

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