

HIV Testing Outcomes and Risk Behaviors in an Urban STI Clinic in Philadelphia

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Background

The CDC has recommended opt-out HIV testing since 2006. In response to new CDC guidelines, the city of Philadelphia launched a rapid HIV testing and counseling campaign in public health clinics in 2007.

Objective and Methods

A survey was conducted among 1,697 individuals counseled and tested for HIV at an STI clinic in urban Philadelphia between July 1, 2007 and August 1, 2008. Data were collected on demographics, HIV risk behaviors, and HIV test results. Participants were also asked to rate their own HIV risk behaviors.



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Results

Fifty-six percent of testers were male; 44% were female. Participants were overwhelmingly (96%) African American. Approximately 1.1% of the population tested HIV-positive. The patient population generally reported high-risk HIV behaviors: ten percent of testers reported ever having a same sex partner and 56% reported ever having an STI. Approximately 25% reported having ever used cocaine; 13% reported ever exchanging sex for drugs or money, and 12% reported more than 5 sexual partners in the last year. Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported never using condoms. In spite of these reported risk behaviors, when asked to report their risks for HIV, 91% reported their risks as zero or low.

Conclusion

Of 1,697 individuals counseled and tested for HIV in a public STI clinic in Philadelphia, over 1% tested HIV-positive. Even after counseling and testing, many individuals underestimate their risk for HIV. Testing based on self-reported HIV risks may fail to diagnose large numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS.