

Attitudes on HIV Testing in the ED: Staff Attitudes

Study Objectives

Assess Staff Attitudes about Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) testing in the emergency department and identify barriers to rapid HIV testing in the ED.

Methods

Self-administered survey; staff of a large urban University ED. Registered nurses (RNs), attending physicians, paramedics, clinical staff and Patient Care Assistants were eligible. 34 staff members responded. 14.7% (5) were attending physicians, 55.9% (19) RNs, 14.7% (5) medics and 5 (14.7%), "other" or declined to answer. 67.6% had been at this location for < 5 years, but over half had > 5 years professional experience.

Results

Desire for Testing: 58.8% felt that the ED should **not** offer HIV testing; 26.5% favored testing. 29.5% thought HIV testing would take too much time; although 39.5% disagreed. Few (11.8%) were concerned that patients would be offended if offered testing. 29.4% thought the ED should offer HIV testing to high risk patients; 23.6% approved of universal testing. Conversely, 67.6% were against high risk testing only and 64.7% were against universal testing.

Delivery of Results: 49.1% felt comfortable disclosing **POSITIVE** results; 41.2% were not. 54.9% would be

Results, continued

comfortable disclosing **NEGATIVE** results; 29.5% were not. The majority thought all results should be disclosed by an attending (73.5%); the remainder were divided among nurse, resident/intern; counselor or other. Not one felt that a social worker would be an appropriate person to disclose the results.

Barriers to Rapid HIV Testing in the ED: (Multiple answers permitted.) Half felt that the biggest barrier would be the insufficient time for counseling. 47% expected an avalanche of people would come to the ED just to get tested. 35.3% of staff had privacy and confidentiality concerns, while 23.5% thought that the subject matter was too sensitive. 20.7% percent of the staff would feel **uncomfortable** talking to HIV positive patients. 17.7% said that there would not be enough time to perform an HIV test, and 5.9% thought that it would be too difficult. 20.6% gave "other" reasons while 5.9% did not respond.

Conclusion

ED staff do not want rapid HIV testing done in the ED. The ED staff identified several barriers that would prevent them from offering rapid HIV testing: Personal discomfort, lack of time and concerns about being overwhelmed by patients wanting testing.

Authors & Affiliations

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A Survey of Staff Attitudes Regarding Rapid HIV Testing in the Emergency Department.

This is a research survey which asks you about your attitudes about testing for HIV in the ED. This is anonymous. We will NOT collect your name; because this is research, you do not need to participate if you don't want to, but we are very grateful if you do; participating is your choice and choosing not to participate will not affect your employment in any way. There are 11 questions. Thank you for your cooperation. Please take this survey only once in this calendar year: _____.

For each statement below, please circle whether you:
strongly disagree – disagree – have no opinion – agree – or strongly agree with the statement.

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
The Emergency Department should offer immunizations & / or immunization updates.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
The Emergency Department should offer HIV testing.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
Offering rapid HIV testing will take too much time and will interfere with my job duties.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
I am afraid that if we ask patients about HIV testing, they will be offended or upset.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
The Emergency Department should offer rapid HIV testing to high risk patients only.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
The Emergency Department should offer rapid HIV testing to ALL patients.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
I am comfortable disclosing the results of a **positive** HIV test to a patient.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
I am comfortable disclosing the results of a **negative** HIV test to a patient.

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree
The following person should disclose the results of a **positive** HIV test to a patient (circle one).

nurse (1) - resident/intern (2) - HIV counselor(3)- social worker (4)- attending physician(5)- other (specify) _____

The following are barriers that would prevent me from providing rapid HIV testing. (mark ALL that apply)

- Subject matter is too sensitive
- Confidentiality/ privacy concerns
- I don't have the time to do the testing
- I don't have the time to / want to do the counseling
- Rapid testing would be too difficult to perform
- I am uncomfortable talking to an HIV positive patient
- We have no way to connect a new positive to HIV care.
- Patients will "freak out" when they learn the results
- If we start testing, there will be an avalanche of persons who come to the ED just to get tested.
- Other (specify): _____

The ED should update tetanus vaccinations:

strongly disagree -- disagree -- no opinion -- agree -- strongly agree

Position (circle) : Attending Emergency Physician / PA / RN / Medic / PCA / Other _____

Years of practice in your field: 0-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11+ _____

Thank you again for answering this survey.