



Barriers in Offering HIV Testing in Medical Settings are Likely to be Addressed With Short and Targeted Education – Data From the Expanded Staff Questionnaire OptTEST Project

Justyna D. Kowalska¹, Maria Jesús Perez-Elias², Rossie Lugo Colon³, Caroline Rae⁴, David Jilich⁵, Ida Sperle⁶ and Ann Sullivan⁴ - for OptTEST by HIV in Europe

¹Hospital for Infectious Diseases, Medical University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland, ²Hospital Ramón y Cajal, Instituto de Investigación Ramón y Cajal, Department of Infectious Diseases, Madrid, Spain, ³Centre d'Estudis Epidemiològics sobre les Infeccions de Transmissió Sexual i Sida de Catalunya (CEEISCAT), Barcelona, Spain, ⁴HIV and Sexual Health in the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom, ⁵Hospital Na Bulovce, Department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases, Prague, Czech Republic, ⁶CHIP, Centre of Excellence for Health, Immunity and Infections, Department of Infectious Diseases, Rigshospitalet, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Objective

HIV testing in medical settings in Europe remain a challenge. Therefore an important part of the OptTEST project is to investigate barriers toward HIV testing.

Methods

The OptTEST methodology includes a survey to investigate attitudes toward HIV testing among medical staff participating in the project. In 2015, a co-project was initiated to survey medical centres outside the core project. Questionnaires were distributed by the national coordinators. Responses provided by persons who had offered an HIV test were compared with those who had never offered a test.

Results

- 682 surveys were received: 315 (46.2%) from Spain, 215 (36.8%) from Poland, 65 (9.5%) from United Kingdom and 51 (7.5%) from Czech Republic.
- Respondents were based in out-patient clinics (278; 42.5%), general practice (GP) (185; 27.6%), hospital wards (171; 25.5%) and other medical services (36; 5.4%).
- The majority were women (533; 79.3%), medical doctors (384; 56.7%), with a median age of 41 (IQR: 30-52) years.
- 257 (38.1%) had never offered an HIV test, 75% of them indicated the need for more training in this area and 66.5% indicated they have not enough knowledge to answer patients' questions.
- When compared with those who had offered an HIV test, they were more likely to fear that offering an HIV test would be rejected or would influence patients' opinion on services. They were more likely to prefer that the patient requested the test or to make the offer to persons with known risk behaviors (Table).
- Interestingly, 73.8% of respondents, irrespective of earlier HIV testing experience, agreed that indicator-condition based testing for HIV is a good approach.

Conclusion

The main concern among respondents who have not previously tested patients for HIV is lack of experience and training. This underlines the need for developing targeted and brief educational programs in this area.

Parameter	Nr	Ever offered HIV test 418 (61.9)	Never offered HIV test 257 (38.1)	P value
		Median (IQR)		
Age	630	41 (30-52)	41 (30-51)	0.5635
Number of staff	502	40 (26-61)	38 (25-61)	0.8497
		N (%)		
Female gender	665	310 (74.9)	217(86.4)	0.0004
Professional group	670			<0.0001
Medical doctor	383	309 (74.6)	74 (28.9)	
Nurse	175	92 (22.2)	83 (32.4)	
Other medical	43	5 (1.2)	38 (14.8)	
Other non-medical	69	8 (1.9)	61 (23.8)	
Centre's characteristic	663			<0.0001
GP	184	141 (34.1)	43 (17.2)	
Out-patients care	276	169 (40.9)	107 (42.8)	
Hospital care	170	94 (22.8)	76 (30.4)	
Other	33	9 (2.2)	24 (9.6)	
Survey questions		Number of respondents who agree/strongly agree n (%)		
People with undiagnosed HIV can be well with no symptoms for years	674	404 (96.6)	216 (84.4)	<0.0001
If diagnosed early HIV can be managed effectively with medication	670	393 (94.2)	225 (88.9)	0.0414
HIV(+) on medication are less likely to transmit the infection	675	351 (84.4)	147 (57.6)	<0.0001
It is important that people know their HIV status	674	406(97.4)	249 (96.9)	0.8838
HIV test should only be performed if patient asks for it	673	43 (10.3)	52 (20.3)	<0.001
HIV test should only be offered to people with high risk	670	125 (30.1)	131 (51.4)	<0.0001
A leaflet or brief pre-test discussion is sufficient before offering HIV test	670	235 (56.5)	116 (45.7)	0.0105
Offering HIV test to people with indicator conditions is a good idea	668	289 (69.5)	165 (65.5)	0.1569
I am concerned patients might ask questions I cannot answer	667	130 (31.2)	167 (66.5)	<0.0001
I prefer that patients ask for test themselves	669	53 (12.7)	83 (32.8)	<0.0001
I don't think that offering HIV test will be acceptable to patients	666	28 (6.7)	52 (7.8)	<0.0001
I don't have time to include HIV testing as part of patients' care	663	34 (8.2)	46 (18.5)	<0.0001
I would require additional training before offering HIV test	667	179 (43.0)	189 (75.3)	<0.0001
I am comfortable discussing HIV testing with patients	667	294 (70.1)	117 (46.6)	<0.0001
Language barriers prevent some patients from being offered HIV testing	668	190 (45.6)	116 (46.2)	0.0516
I am concerned that offering HIV testing will negatively affect patients' opinion about our services	668	40 (9.6)	50 (20.0)	<0.0001

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