

Contribution of anonymous partner notification service on HIV/STI detection at a community-based sexual health centre for MSM

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CheckpointLX, definition and services

GAT's community-based and peer-led sexual health centre, tailored for HIV combined prevention, testing and linkage to care, and targeted to MSM in Lisbon, Portugal.

It provides:

1. condoms and lubricants;
2. peer counselling;
3. HIV, syphilis, HBV, HCV rapid testing;
4. gonorrhoea, chlamydia, HPV, and anal cancer screenings;
5. vaccines and IM antibiotics administration;
6. referrals to access PEP, PrEP and TasP at NHS and escort to first medical appointment;
7. self-support group for MSM living with HIV;
8. and partner notification.



Why partner notification at Checkpoints?

Checkpoints have proven to:

- increase the acceptability and uptake of rapid HIV testing among MSM ([Campbell et al 2018](#));
- be cost effective in HIV detection among MSM ([Perelman et al 2016](#));
- have high user satisfaction ([Préau et al 2016](#));
- identify patients at an earlier stage of HIV infection than testing in clinical settings ([Freeman-Romilly et al 2017](#)).

Anonymous partner notifications services at Checkpoints could enable:

- disclosure HIV/STI status without disclosure of identity and disclosure to occasional partners ([Bairan et al, 2007](#));
- early testing, diagnosis and/or preventive treatment of all sexual partners ([WHO, 2016](#));
- acute HIV infection detection ([Campos et al, 2016](#)).

CheckOUT, definition and aims

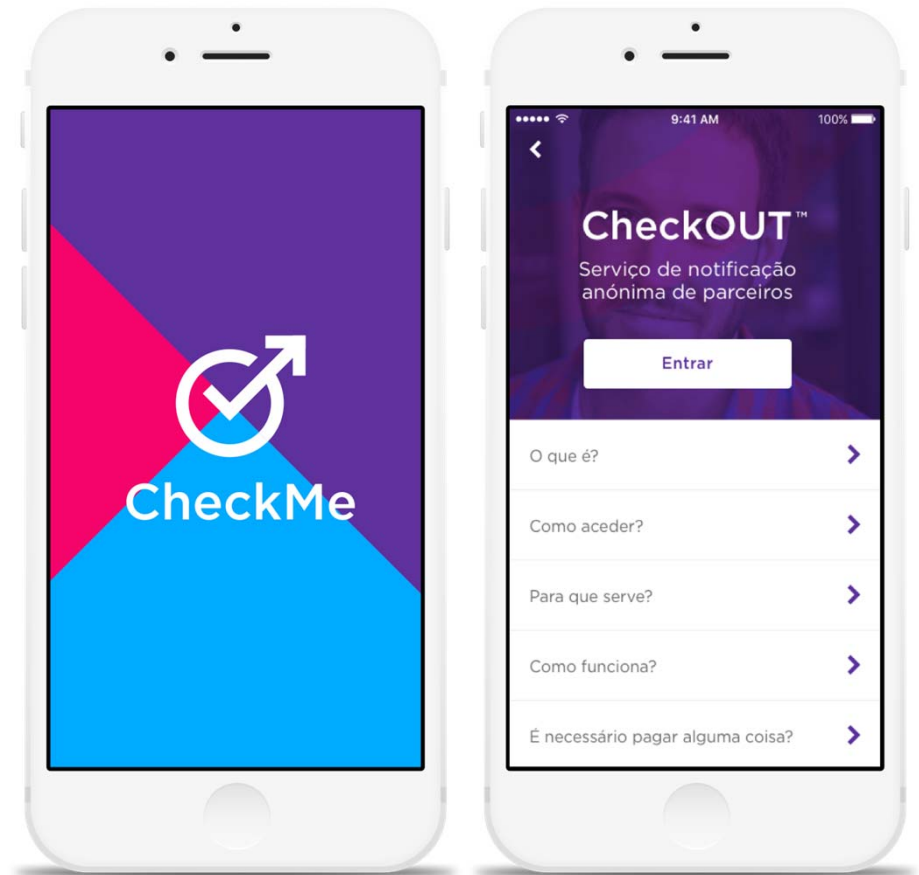
CheckpointLX initiated the CheckOUT program in June 2015.

Approach:

- Web-based;
- Free of charge;
- Anonymous and confidential;
- Voluntary self-disclosure;
- Client-led referral.

Tool for:

- self-disclosure of MSM with a recent HIV or STI diagnosis or reactive test at CheckpointLX;
- earlier testing of sexual partners of MSM with a recent HIV or STI diagnosis or reactive at CheckpointLX.



CheckOUT, how it works

- A. The peer tester gives a user login for the CheckOUT area of the CheckpointLX website or mobile app.
- B. On the CheckOUT page, clients insert their partners' phone numbers or email addresses, agree with predefined notification wording, agree with disclaimers and then submit.
- C. On completion, a message is sent automatically to the listed partners from official CheckpointLX phone number or email address.
- D. MSM attending CheckpointLX, who report as reason for testing, an anonymous partner notification (CheckOUT sms or email), have access to both rapid (HIV, HBV, HCV and syphilis) and laboratory (chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis) testing.



Objective

This study aims to describe the impact of anonymous partner notification service CheckOUT on HIV/STI detection at CheckpointLX.

Method

From June 2015 to December 2018:

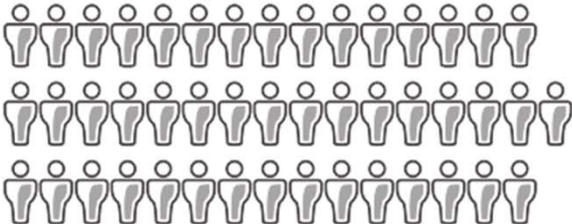
- Data on user logins generated, actual user logins, notifications sent and money spent was extracted from CheckOUT backoffice.
- Data on MSM testing, as a consequence of a partner anonymous notification, and their test results was extracted from entrance, follow-up or refusal questionnaires from both CheckpointLX Lisbon MSM Cohort (rapid testing sessions) and STI clinic (laboratory testing sessions).


Results

 **897 logins**
were given to MSM
with a diagnosis
or reactive test
90 logins were used

 **516 SMS**
20 emails
were sent

 **15 euro**
notification
costs

 **50 MSM** gave as reason
for rapid testing
"receiving an anonymous
notification"

 **2 HIV and 4 syphilis** detected
(2 coinfections)

 **15 MSM** gave as reason
for the STI appointment
"receiving an anonymous
notification"

 **1 Chlamydia**
detected

Conclusions

- CheckOUT is:
 - very cheap to maintain;
 - feasible for peer testers;
 - acceptable to MSM;
 - enabling early detection.
- This service enabled partner testing and contributed to detect otherwise, undiagnosed infections.

Strengths and limitations

- Strengths:
 - anonymity;
 - self-led disclosure;
 - 24/7 availability;
 - automatic statistics;
 - free of charge e-mails;
 - international SMS notifications available and cheap;
 - very low demanding for staff.
- Limitations:
 - Can't control look back intervals used;
 - Anonymity in (rare) cases where notified partner has/had one lifetime partner;
 - If a third party reads the notifications (if scholar/company emails are used and notified MSM have smartphone screen SMS notifications enabled);
 - Can't access service effectiveness (e.g. MSM not tested at CheckpointLX).

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