

Good practices in preventing AIDS-use of **rapid HIV test** in oral fluid

Operational Team

M. Meliou - A. Kanakari,
D. Iliadis - E. Sintrou,
V. Chioti - A. Altani

Info NOW! 800 11 11 600

Introduction

HIV/AIDS is a fast growing phenomenon in Greece. Until the end of 2010 the number of cases reached 10.452 and by the end of 2011 the number raised to 11.340 (10/2011). Although, MSM-men having sex with men, still keep the lead role in HIV incidents, no sexual or behavioral group seems to be untouched.

Objectives

The stigma following the syndrome, fear and psychological burden of waiting the results creates the need of a *rapid, accurate, anonymous* test. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the rapid HIV testing as a tool in secondary prevention. At the same time, the public level of awareness and (indirectly) the efficacy of primary prevention until today, were also examined. The study did not intend to focus only on native population but also touch the migration flow which affected the country, the latest years

GET TESTED NOW FOR H.I.V. / BE AWARE!
**Use condom
get tested**



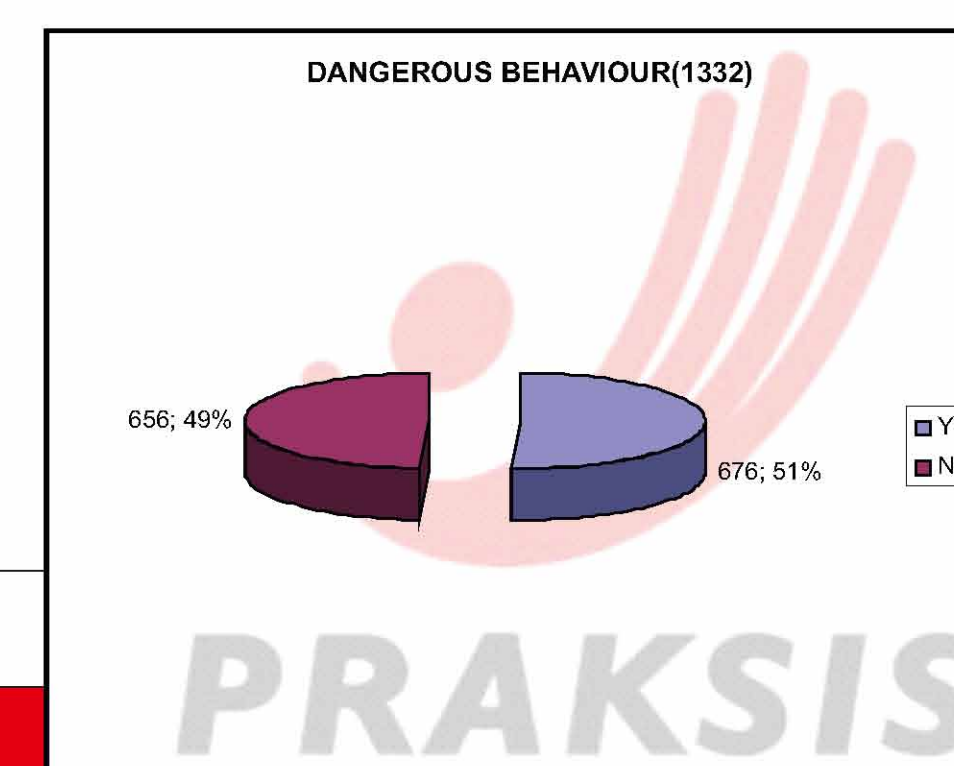
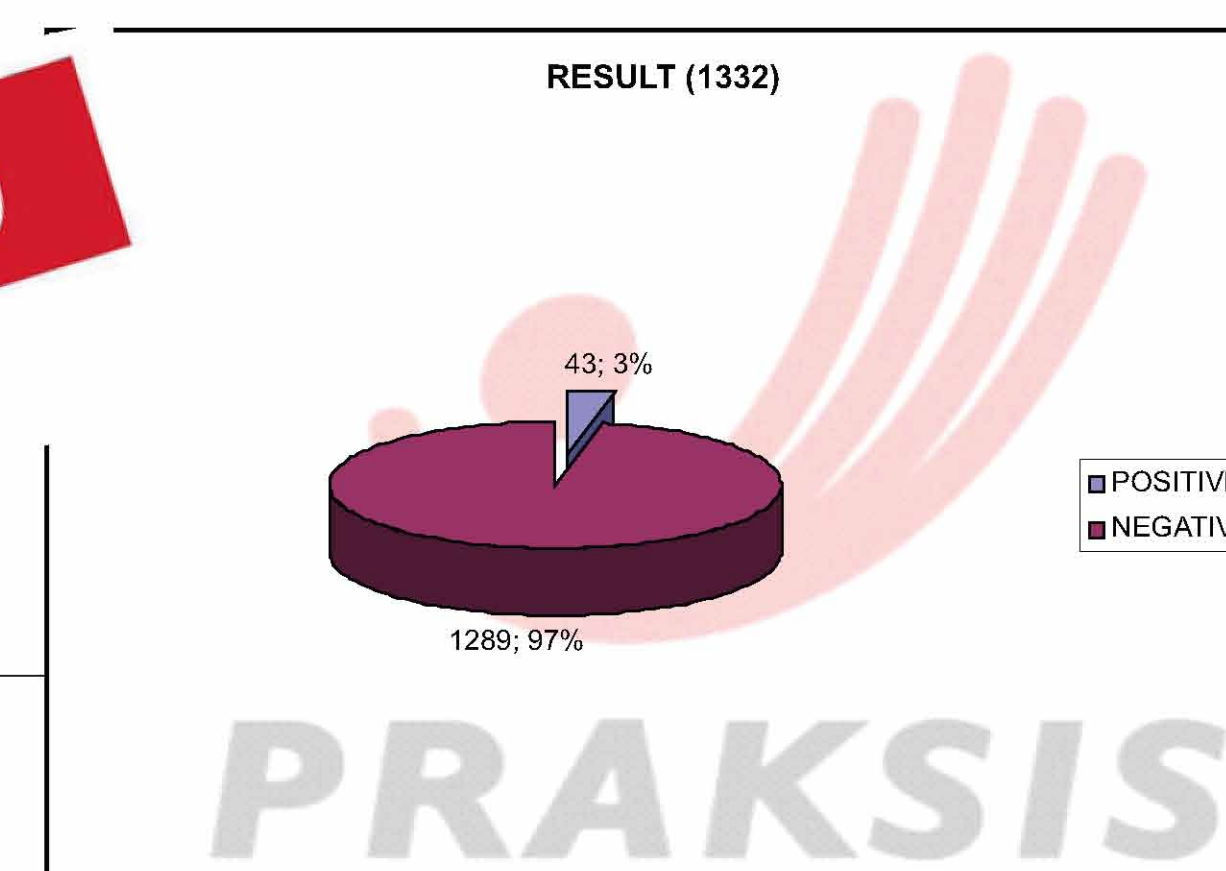
Methods

All tests took place in the context of a program for HIV protection, implemented by the Greek NGO PRAKSIS. The program included an information campaign through informative TV, radio spots and printed material in 24 languages.

At the same time, a free of charge phone line was available concerning HIV protection and testing possibilities. The basic axis of the program was rapid HIV testing, which was offered in NGO PRAKSIS polyclinics in Athens and Thessalonica as well as in a mobile unit stationed in various places of interest such as festivals, concert sites, sauna clubs and gay bars.

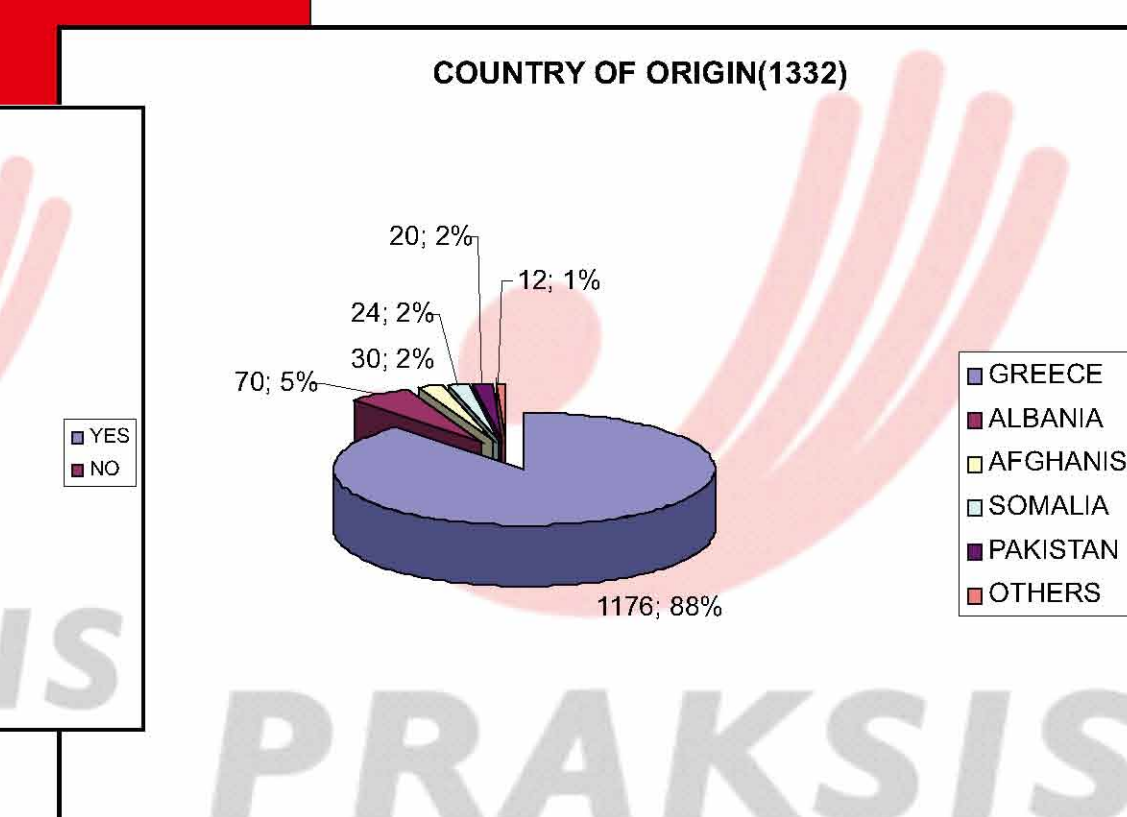
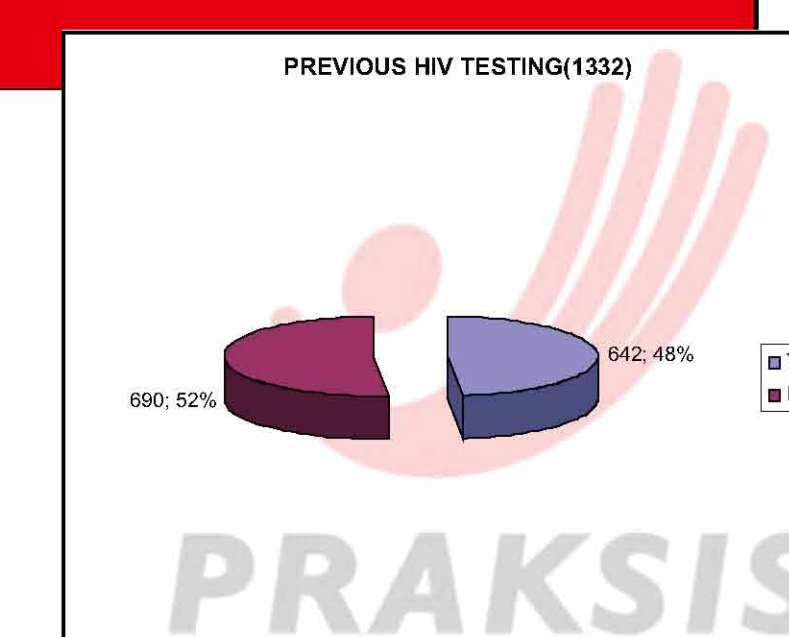
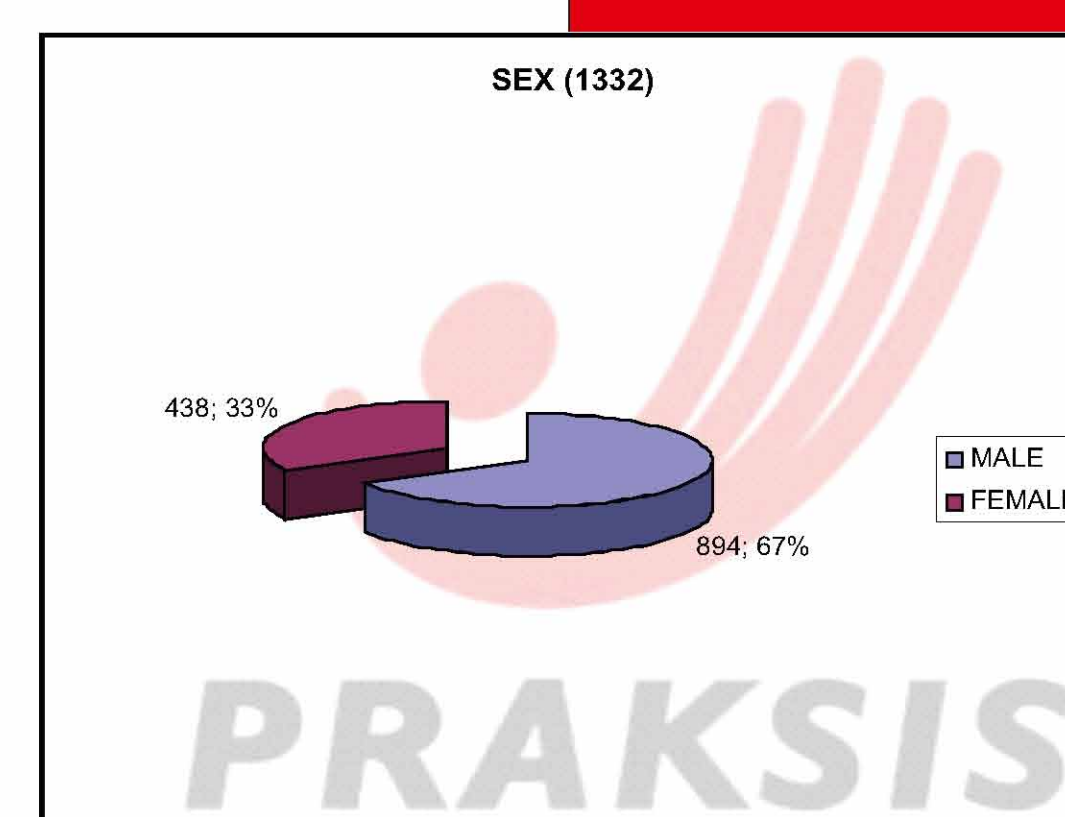
1.332 tests were conducted from 1/6/2010 to 30/11/2011. All the participants in this period of 18 months were between 18-61 years of age and participated voluntarily. They were tested using the rapid HIV test in oral fluid. The test used was the OraQuick ADVANCE® Rapid HIV-1/2 Antibody Test that detects antibodies to HIV-1 and HIV-2 in 20 minutes.

The tests were conducted under health professionals surveillance, anonymously and all participants were offered pre-counseling and post-counseling sessions of professionals with a psychosocial profile. It must be noted that this program is still being implemented and these are just preliminary results.



Results

The majority of the people tested were men (67%). The vast majority 88,2% were Greeks. Half of the people tested were showing some sort of dangerous behavior and almost half of them had been previously tested. Finally, 3,2% of the tests conducted showed detection of HIV 1,2 antibodies.



Conclusions-Discussion

Men seem to have fewer hesitations towards testing and seem to get tested more often. This could be due to better information, less stigmatization of men who get tested or the fact that the MSM community has a higher level of awareness.

Although, as expected, the majority of the people that got tested were Greeks, it is important to note that the rest of the ethnicities that participated follow the pattern of the immigration flows that affect Greece.

It is worth mentioning that even though half of the participants had previously been tested and have a certain level of awareness concerning HIV, many of them continue to show some sort of dangerous behavior even to their own subjective criterion.

Although, the majority of the participants did not feel comfortable revealing their sexual preferences or the way they were exposed to HIV, of those who were willing to answer, we know that 17 of the tests that detected antibodies concerned MSM, 4 concerned people from African countries with heterosexual orientation, 4 concerned IDUs.

Finally, it must be noted that the percentage of positive results does not seem to reduce through the year. The need for a fast, anonymous and user friendly way of testing is undeniable. Rapid HIV testing, especially conducted in the context of counseling, could have huge socioeconomic benefits.

References

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