

BACKGROUND

Studies estimate that up to 50% of those with HIV infection in the European Region are unaware of their infection and 24-39% of HIV-infected patients present with advanced disease. There is strong evidence that early diagnosis and appropriate initiation of ARV reduce morbidity and mortality. Patients on ARV who attend for medical care regularly are more likely to have suppressed viral load compared to those who attend irregularly and are therefore less likely to transmit HIV.

Most European countries use risk factor-based HIV screening, this has had limited success towards reducing undiagnosed HIV and late presentation for HIV care. It is critical to develop innovative testing strategies that are effective, acceptable, accessible and adaptable. HIV testing strategies shown to be cost-effective in some European settings may not be in others, given the variation in prevalence, health care systems and access to care. Just as important, is the rapid and robust link to HIV medical care and the initiation of antiretroviral therapy (ARV) in those with low CD4 counts.

OptTEST PARTNERS



Co-funded by the 2nd Health Programme of the European Union



Optimising testing and linkage to care for HIV across Europe

The OptTEST project (Optimising testing and linkage to care for HIV across Europe) A three year project co-funded by the Consumers, Health and Food Executive Agency (CHAFEA) under the EU Public Health Programme.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the OptTEST project is to reduce the number of undiagnosed people with HIV infection and newly diagnosed late presenters in the European regions and to promote timely treatment and care.

The project will provide tools and assessment methods to analyse and effectively respond to late presentation for HIV care and treatment with strong emphasis on the most affected regions/groups. Comparison will be made between different regions of Europe with different HIV epidemics, health care structures, HIV testing policies and HIV- related stigmatization and criminalization.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1) To improve multi-profession, multi-country stakeholder dialogue to develop strategies to improve early diagnosis and care of people with HIV across Europe by 2016.

2) To increase knowledge on linkage to and retention in HIV care after diagnosis across geographical and healthcare settings and target groups by 2016.

3) Create understanding and suggest evidence-based solutions to provider barriers to testing through pilot implementation of a novel HIV testing strategy (Indicator Condition-guided) in selected European health-care settings and countries by 2016.

4) To assemble and evaluate various existing HIV testing strategies in Europe by 2016.

5) To increase knowledge of how stigma and legal barriers to HIV testing affects the uptake of HIV testing and treatment, particularly in most affected groups and regions by 2016.

TARGET GROUPS

The main target groups are health care professionals and (non) HIV clinicians, health care managers, social workers, researchers, civil society organization staff, policy makers and government officials, and relevant press.

THE 4 CORE WORK PACKAGES

Work Package	Lead Partner	Partners	Objective
WP4: Linkage to and retention in HIV care after diagnosis.	PHE	CHIP SSAT INSERM GNP+ ISCIH NIHD	Improve data on linkage to care and observe regional differences by implementing <i>the treatment cascade</i> in different countries, epidemics and health care structures, to present an applicable definition and standard methodology.
WP5: Development and implementation of tools and strategies for indicator condition guided HIV testing.	SSAT	CHIP MEDFASH INSERM ISCIH NIHD	Developing the indicator disease guided HIV testing strategy across Europe and producing applicable tools for broader implementation. Focus will be on provider based barriers to testing and the offer and uptake rates for HIV testing.
WP6: The cost-effectiveness of HIV testing strategies in priority groups and regions.	INSERM	ISCIH NIHD	Determine the cost-effectiveness of different HIV testing strategies in different settings, regions and priority groups in Europe and estimating the survival benefits, cost and cost-effectiveness of innovative HIV testing strategies in Europe.
WP7: Stigma and legal barriers to the provision and uptake of HIV testing services.	GNP+	CHIP PHE	Enable networks of PLHIV to use the data they collect to inform advocacy and build partnerships with health care providers to ensure better and more equitable access to services. Good practice to scale-up testing will be produced and disseminated.