

ACT Testing Month

Promoting testing and increasing cross sector collaboration

Todkill M¹, Tyson A^{1,2}, Habel P³, Moss P⁴, Rossteuscher K⁴, Didlick J⁵, Crawford S⁶, Freeman H⁷, Martin SJ^{1,2}

¹Canberra Sexual Health Centre, ²Australian National Medical School, ³Capital Health Network, ⁴AIDS Action Council of ACT, ⁵Hepatitis ACT, ⁶Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, ⁷Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT

Background

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) held its first Testing Month in November 2014 to promote initial and ongoing testing for HIV, STI and viral hepatitis. This new cross sector initiative was prompted by an increase in notifications and the need to work collaboratively across organisations and practitioners to reach diverse priority populations. We aimed to raise awareness of the ongoing challenge posed by HIV, STI and hepatitis and of the benefits of testing with health care providers, populations at risk and the wider sexually active population.

Methods

- A co-ordinating group from government, primary care and non-government organisations was established, with leadership from the AIDS Action Council and Canberra Sexual Health Centre
- Testing Month was launched at the start of November 2014 at Fairday, a queer community event, with a specific focus on 'Get Tested' as part of the national Ending HIV campaign
- Events were scheduled throughout November, up to and including World Aids Day initiatives in early December
- Social and mainstream media were used to promote testing
- Targeted outreach testing was offered to priority populations in a variety of settings
- Workplace-based GP education was promoted, with a focus on local epidemiology, national testing guidelines and participant perceptions of barriers to testing
- There was an emphasis on relationship and capacity building across the sector as a platform for ongoing collaboration to meet the needs of priority populations

Results

Social marketing focused on testing with links to testing sites

- Facebook ads and boosted posts, Grindr, Twitter, Instagram, AIDS Action Council and ACT Government websites
- Local media ran 4 print articles, 1 radio interview and advertising on 2 local radio stations

Testing sites included AIDS Action Council, pharmacies, sex on premises venues and additional M-Clinic sessions (which was the most popular testing site)

- 72 people attended targeted outreach testing
- 62 male, 8 female and 2 trans people were tested; 44% were aged 21-30 years
- 20% of those tested had never been tested before
- 30% of those ever tested had not been tested in the previous 12 months

Workplace GP-education

- 38 doctors and 19 nurses from 5 general practices, a justice health centre and a specialist travel clinic attended 45 minute workplace education sessions
- 2 GP webinars were held during the month

Conclusion

- ACT Testing Month enabled collaboration between government and non-government stakeholders to promote HIV, STI and hepatitis testing according to national clinical guidelines
- Specific outreach testing was geared to particular at risk groups
- Workplace-based small group GP education aimed to increase knowledge and reduce barriers to ongoing testing within primary care.
- The experience and outcomes of the first ACT Testing Month will help plan this year's event
- A Testing Month allows for a range of targeted initiatives but is short enough to maintain momentum
- It is a model that may translate easily to other smaller jurisdictions
- A focus on testing for HIV, STI and hepatitis builds relationships between key stakeholders with expertise across priority populations

Lessons learnt

ACT TESTING MONTH

GET TESTED

Get in control of HIV, STI's and Hepatitis

Stay in control of your health

Get regular check-ups

1 November – 1 December 2014

Visit aidsaction.org.au/testingmonth for info about testing and your health