Missed opportunities for STI testing: a mixed methods study of the impact of a stand-alone HIV testing service

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Background - PRONTO!

- Partnership between Victorian Department of Health, VAC, Burnet Institute
  - Now funded for four more years

- Rapid point of care test
- Community based
- Shop front
- Peer led
- Free
- After hours (4-8pm Tues-Fri, 1-5pm Sat)
- Stand alone HIV service

Background - Comprehensive Testing

- Importance of STI treatment and diagnosis is well known
- Reflected in Australian clinical guidelines
- Multi faceted STI testing promotion
  - "Drama downunder"
  - Clinical services


Aims of this study

Explore the impact of PRONTO! not offering comprehensive STI testing on

- Frequency of testing for HIV at PRONTO!
- Intention to test for STIs at other services
- Explore motivators and barriers to testing

Background - PRONTO!

- 1228 GBM tested at PRONTO! in the first 12 months of operations
  - Increasing appointment occupancy over time
  - 70% classified as high risk
- Early acceptability results were very positive
  - 77% prefer testing with a peer than a doctor or nurse
  - 96% likely to return to PRONTO! for HIV testing
- But... low proportion return within recommended timeframe

Ryan et al. (2015) Who’s coming and who’s coming back? Characteristics of rapid testers and return testers at the PRONTO! community-based HIV testing service
Leitinger et al. (2013) Acceptability and client engagement at a community-based and peer-led HIV testing service: experiences from six sites over four years
Methods – PRONTO! Evaluation Survey

- Data collection
  - Recruitment: All clients between 15May2014-06Oct2014
  - Questions: demographics, testing history, testing intentions, sexual risk, acceptability, marketing
  - Reimbursed with $20 e-gift voucher

- Data analysis
  - Restricted to men, report male to male sex, aged over 18 years, completed >90% of survey
  - Descriptive statistics

Methods – Focus Groups

- Data Collection
  - Recruitment: Clients completing the periodic survey
  - 2x focus groups held at BI, lasting 90 minutes each
  - Participants reimbursed $40 for their time
  - 16 men participated

- Data Analysis
  - Recorded, transcribed
  - Thematic analysis

Methods – Evaluation timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation survey</th>
<th>PRONTO! opens</th>
<th>2013, Aug</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid trial survey</td>
<td>Syphilis POCT offered</td>
<td>2014, Jun</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STI prevalence study performed</td>
<td>2014, Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>End trial survey</td>
<td>Additional 4 years of funding guaranteed</td>
<td>2015, May</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 month trial completed</td>
<td>2015, Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation report planned to be submitted</td>
<td>2015, Dec</td>
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</tbody>
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Results – Evaluation Survey

Demographics
- Age – 31 years (median)
- Country of birth – 65% Australian born
- Sexual identity – 92% gay

Sexual Risk
Of those who reported any anal sex partner in previous 6 months

Results – Evaluation Survey

Intention to test for STIs
Testing history
- 84% have ever tested for HIV
  - 37% usually test at sexual health clinic, 23% at high HIV caseload GP
  - 59% test biannually

Frequency of testing at PRONTO!
- Return to PRONTO!
  - 94% likely to return to PRONTO!
  - 85% likely to test more frequently for HIV now that PRONTO! is open
  - 80% will choose PRONTO! in preference to other HIV testing services

However ...
- 20% reported reason they would NOT return to PRONTO!
  - was they prefer to test for other STIs at the same time as HIV
Results – Evaluation Survey

- Free text comments...

“The staff are wonderful. I like the peer based approach. The only thing they need is to run the full STI testing suite, self swabs and a urine sample can’t be that hard to organise?... Until it actually rolls out, I won’t be returning unfortunately...”

Results – Focus Groups

Convenience of testing

“It made it less of a chore, like I never thought getting a test could be that easy, I just made an appointment half an hour before I was meeting my friends to go get burgers at Fitzroy, and I got it done and walked down Smith St and met them and had dinner, and was like ‘I’ve just had a test’”
- FG2

“Just because I don’t want to go to two places, I would probably just go to my one place and get everything done in one, in one sitting”
- FG1

Results – Focus Groups

Motivators to test for STIs

“HIV’s the big concern, but anything else there’s either symptoms or...less regularly getting tested, less regularly depending on, you know, what’s going on, if you think you’ve had any exposure to anything, so...yeah, that wouldn’t affect my using the service”

Summary

Due to the stand alone HIV testing model employed at PRONTO!:

- Men testing at PRONTO! delay testing for STIs at other services
- Men delay, or wont return to PRONTO! to test for HIV in the absence of comprehensive STI testing

Future directions

- Ongoing evaluation
- Strategic planning for introduction of STI testing
- Provide recommendations to other jurisdictions in peer based model design

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  - VAC management
  - All PRONTO! clients

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  - Sexual Health Society of Victoria
  - APA scholarship
  - Victorian Department of Health

- Participants
  - Evaluation Survey
  - Focus Groups