Community-Based HIV Testing: The Athens Checkpoint Experience

Sophocles Chanos, MSc
Checkpoint Head

Fast Track Cities 2019 Conference, IAPAC, UNAIDS, GNP+
London, 8-11 September 2019
Barbican Centre
Outline

1. Epidemiological data - background information

2. Rationale behind the creation of the 1st CBCT service

3. The Checkpoint initiative and its evolution

4. Checkpoint milestones

5. 2019 – 2020 goals


7. Concluding remarks
EU/EEA VS Greek HIV diagnosis trends
2008 - 2017
The majority of EU/EEA countries reported an increase of HIV diagnoses in MSM, 2006 - 2015

Change of % new HIV diagnoses in MSM 2006-2015

- Reduction
- Increase (<100%)
- Increase (>100%)
- No data reported

Non-visible countries
- Luxembourg
- Malta

Proportion of diagnosed HIV cases with a CD4 count < 350 cells/mm³, 2014 VS 2016, EU/EEA

Proportion of HIV cases diagnosed late (CD4<350 cells/mm³), 2014, EU/EEA

Late diagnosis, 2016, EU/EEA

EU/EEA Average: 48%

HIV test - Greece

Never tested for HIV: 936 (1 out of 3)
Tested at least once for HIV: 1605 (2 out of 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Never received an HIV test result</th>
<th>Received an HIV test result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>N (359) (27.5%)</td>
<td>N (946) (72.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki</td>
<td>N (148) (38.4%)</td>
<td>N (237) (61.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Greece</td>
<td>N (429) (50.4%)</td>
<td>N (422) (49.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Free HIV test

- Yes: 37.16%
- No: 10.30%
- I don't know: 52.46%
HIV testing disruption
Testing facilities reduction
Fee introduction
Discriminatory attitudes
Diagnostics’ stock outs
Sexual health education
Joint activity - partnership

PositiveVoice
people+HIV

Hellenic Association PLWHA, Athens, Greece

&

Aids Healthcare Foundation Europe, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Collaborations
Philosophy

OBJECTIVES
1) HIV, HBV, HCV, Syphilis testing
2) Facilitation of early diagnosis and optimal access to treatment
3) Normalization of HIV testing
4) “Peer-to-peer” counseling services
5) Battling stigma and discrimination

TARGETS
1) Reduce the undiagnosed fraction
2) Reduce the number of MSM who have never been tested before

LOGISTICS
1) Central, easily-accessible location and friendly, non-clinical environment
2) Convenient opening hours (Mo-Sa: 12-8 pm)
3) Scheduled appointments & drop-ins
4) Modern diagnostics (rapid testing)
Activities

- In-premises testing
- Outreach targeted testing & interventions
- Awareness-raising activities
- Informative material distribution
- Condom & Lubricant dispensation
- Data collection – Research

Checkpoint

- Euro HIV EDAT, EMIS, ECHOES, optiTEST, PrEP, HIV epidemiology, ChemSex, Partner Notification, cost effectiveness
- Gay bars-clubs
- Pride festivals
- Detox – Rehab. centers
- Sex cinemas, Saunas
- Prisons
- Refugees’ camps

Checkpoint prevention and testing centers
Checkpoint’s presence in every major event..
6.5 years Checkpoint Milestones
2013 – 2018

WHO, July 2015

ECDC, October 2018
6.5 years Checkpoint Milestones
2013 – July 2019

Fig. 1. Checkpoint tests per year

- HIV
- HCV
- HBV
- Syphilis
6.5 years Checkpoint Milestones
2013 – July 2019

Fig. 2. % Checkpoint HIV diagnoses compared to Greek CDC

Fig. 3. % Checkpoint MSM HIV diagnoses compared to Greek CDC
Knowledge and **best practice transfer** to Albania, Bulgaria, Skopje, Moldova and Cyprus

Ath & Thess Checkpoint: **Cost effective** (Perelman, J. et al., 2017)

2016 **European Citizen Award** and 2017 **Healthcare Business Awards**

> 90% of the reactively tested beneficiaries was successfully linked to care

Dispensing of > than **5 million** free condoms and **400,000** informative material

**Mobile Unit** acquisition (testing services to the **Roma** community around Greece)
2019 - 2020 Checkpoint goals

- Acquisition of 4th generation rapid tests
- Point of care: viral load measurement and other STIs
- Assisted Anonymous Partner Notification System
- Advocacy for self-testing, PrEP, sexual education in schools mainly through the upcoming National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan
- Increase the number of MSM beneficiaries & seropositivity rate achieved so far
- Increase the targeted outreach testing, e.g.: saunas, porn cinemas
- Enhance our presence in refugee camps run by the State for testing and counseling
- Upgrade the electronic system regarding data collection
Fast Track Cities Initiative & Checkpoint & City of Athens 2020 -2022

Aim of cooperation

- Awareness-raising towards beneficial impact of ART
- Significance of routine testing
- Reduction of HIV&HCV prevalence in PWID
- Reduction of % of undiagnosed & late diagnosed cases
- Safer sexual practices & harm reduction counseling
- Support and link recently infected people to care
- Battle stigma effects and discriminations
Arson attack, March 11th 2019
1. Community-based, friendly, non-judgmental, free testing had a huge impact to Greece

2. Reduction of new diagnoses / infections

3. The Checkpoint has managed to change the landscape of the attitudes, perceptions & knowledge in MSM

Have you been tested for HIV in the past?

- Yes: 75.20%
- No: 24.50%
- No response: 0.20%

Do you know where you can get tested for HIV?

- Yes: 59%
- No: 22%
- Do not know: 19%

EMIS 2010: 30% never been tested before

EMIS 2010: 47.5% did not know / was not sure
Concluding remarks

4. Checkpoint: “success story” in intensifying public health through its testing and awareness-raising activities

5. Important cooperation between the City of Athens & Checkpoint in curbing the epidemic
Donors - Supporters

Foundations
Ath & Thess Checkpoint team
Athens, Thessaloniki and rest of Greek regions’ volunteers

Thank you!
Thank you!

Sophocles Chanos, MSc  
Checkpoint Head

schanos@athcheckpoint.gr

www.mycheckpoint.gr

www.facebook.com/myCheckpointGR