Social Network Strategy as an effective HIV testing approach: key results and findings

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Almaty Model for Epidemic Control (AMEC) is designed and implemented by a consortium of local organizations led by ICAP at Columbia University to create and implement a cost-effective, inclusive and sustainable city program that works to achieve HIV epidemic control in Almaty.

Elton John AIDS Foundation

June 2020-June 2024
Social Network Strategy (SNS) HIV Testing Approach Implementation in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from September 2021

- **Seeds’ recruitment** at Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Almaty AIDS Centre
  - Testing at the Almaty AIDS center by CBO staff

- **PWUD**
  - Assisted HIV testing with OraQuick test-kit
  - Confirmatory HIV testing
  - HIV prevention counseling and referral to PrEP and harm reduction services
  - Prompt ART initiation
  - Issuing food coupons (USD6) as incentive for HIV testing and recruitment of other people. NPS also receive a harm reduction kit.

- **MSM**
  - Testing at the CBO office
  - Distribution of up to 3 recruitment coupons
  - Recruitment of new individuals
Social Network Strategy (SNS): Key Results

5773 coupons distributed

2273 people tested

71 new HIV-positive

97% initiated on ART

September 1, 2021 – July 31, 2023
SNS, PWUD, September 2021 – July 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL SEEDS</th>
<th>COUPONS DISTRIBUTED</th>
<th>TESTED</th>
<th>REACTIVE</th>
<th>NEW HIV CASES</th>
<th>INITIATED ART</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>3960</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yield (%)**

- Females: 3.0%
- Males: 3.6%
- New Psychoactive Substances (NPS): 3.1%
- Opioids: 2.3%
- Polydrug use: 3.5%
- Never tested: 4.1%
- More than a year ago: 1.8%

**Sex**

- Females: 3,5%
- Males: 97%

**Drug Type**

- New (n=1632)
- Repeat (n=92)
SNS, PWUD, September 2021 – July 2023

**Sex**

- Male (n=1324)
- Female (n=400)

**Age group**

- 17-19 (n=34)
- 20-29 (n=321)
- 30-39 (n=615)
- 40-49 (n=502)
- 50-59 (n=213)
- >=60 (n=39)

**Drug type**

- Pharmacy drugs (n=48)
- NPS (n=1192)
- Opioids (n=257)
- Poludrug use (n=227)

**Last HIV test**

- During the past 12 months (n=218)
- More 12 months ago (n=592)
- Not tested before (n=914)
SNS, MSM, March 2022 – July 2023

**INITIAL SEEDS**: 233

**COUPONS DISTRIBUTED**: 1570

**TESTED**: 464

**REACTIVE**: 16

**CONFIRMED**: 11

**INITIATED ART**: 11

**Yield (%)**
- Never tested: 2.5%
- More than a year ago: 5.0%
- During the past 12 months: 91%

**Never tested**
- New (n=422): 91%
- Repeat (n=42): 9%

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Percentage of new HIV cases by CBO testing modality

### PWUD
- **SNS**: 1724 tested, 60 new HIV positives, 3.5% yield
- **OUTREACH**: 1948 tested, 32 new HIV positives, 1.6% yield
- **SELF-REFERRAL**: 51 tested, 1 new HIV positive, 2.0% yield

### MSM
- **SNS**: 466 tested, 11 new HIV positives, 2.4% yield
- **OUTREACH**: 2531 tested, 20 new HIV positives, 0.8% yield
- **SELF-REFERRAL**: 444 tested, 8 new HIV positives, 1.8% yield
Lessons learned

Status neutral HIV prevention and care
✓ SNS is effective at accessing hard-to-reach people, including people using NPS and first-time-testers
✓ Use of innovative technologies is important for addressing status neutral approach towards HIV prevention and care, and ensuring HIV diagnosis confirmation

Trust-based partnership
✓ CBO office at the AIDS Centre increases the effectiveness of the SNS HIV testing approach and strengthens the cooperation between the government healthcare service providers and CBOs

Quality monitoring and support
✓ Routine individual and group-level site management and CBO staff capacity building
✓ Development and implementation of tools that strengthen program decision-making
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Thank you!

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