

Outreach programme in sex-on-premises venues: facilitating linkage to care and prevention services

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Introduction/Summary

- ASA is a community based organization active in HIV care and prevention since 1985 in Milano
- ASA runs an outreach programme aimed at providing HIV and syphilis testing in sex-on-premises venues attended by gay men, bisexual men and other men who have sex with men since 2017.

Study Design

- Rapid dual HIV/syphilis test are offered:
 - each client of the outreach programme is identified through an anonymous unique alphanumeric identifier since 2021.
 - pre-test counselling is offered to all clients, that includes a structured interview investigating sexual behaviours and attitudes towards HIV and prevention tools.
 - demographics are collected and associated with the unique identifier, together with HIV/syphilis test results, and structured interviews data.
- Individuals with a reactive test result get, on the spot, an appointment at the clinical centre most convenient for them, for confirmatory test and treatment initiation.
- Clients interested in starting PrEP are linked with PrEP programmes.
- A peer worker offers to exchange contacts, to further support with linkage to care.
- Clinical data is then collected with clients' consent and anonymized.

Methods

- Data for rapid tests and interviews conducted between March 2023 and March 2024 was analysed using descriptive statistics.
- A longitudinal analysis was performed to assess clients' behavioural and attitude changes between 2021 and 2024.

Results

- 150 tests and interviews were performed between March 2023 and March 2024.
- Client characteristics are summarised in *Table 1*:
 - Clients were predominantly male (95%), aged 30-50 (59%), born in Italy (84%), not living in Milano (57%)
 - 9% had never tested before, while 18% had a previous diagnosis for syphilis and 1 for HIV
 - 6 (4%) reported being sex workers, all of them migrants and 1 of them had never tested before

Table 1. Characteristics of clients

Patient	Age	Gender	Country of birth	Reactive test date	Confirmation test date	Baseline CD4 (cells/mm ³)	Baseline Viral Load (cp/ml)
1	43	Male	Outside EU	01-apr-23	10-jun-23	118	1.080.000
2	32	Male	Outside EU	06-may-23	18-may-23	79	774.000
3	42	Male	Outside EU	14-oct-23	22-oct-23	786	41.400

Patient	Latest Follow-up	Latest CD4 (cells/mm ³)	Current Viral Load (cp/ml)	ART	Other Notes
1	29-dec-23	232	80	BIC/TAF/FTC	-
2	05-feb-24	503	<20	BIC/TAF/FTC	HPV-related LSIL (AIN1)
3	12-mar-24	802	<20	TDF/FTC/DTG, then 3TC/DTG	Latent tuberculosis, Mycoplasma genitalium urethritis

Results

Reactive for HIV / syphilis

- 2 tests were reactive for HIV (1,3%), 2 for syphilis and 1 for both.
- Diagnosis and treatment initiation were confirmed for all 3 clients with suspected HIV infection after exchanging contacts, and their clinical data is presented in *Table 2*.

Interest in PrEP

- 57 clients were interested to starting PrEP, only 3 of them accepted to exchange contacts and for all 3 PrEP initiation was confirmed.

Longitudinal analysis

- The longitudinal analysis revealed that 16 clients had already tested within the programme at least once. Of them, 5 (31%) had never tested before 2021. Also, 10 (63%) first reported not being interested in PrEP and changed their attitude at their latest interview.

Table 2. Clients with HIV infection

Age		
18-25	9	6%
26-30	5	4%
30-40	60	40%
40-50	29	19%
>50	47	31%
Country		
Italy	124	83%
EU	5	3%
Outside EU	21	14%
Place of residence		
Milano	64	43%
Outside of Milano	86	57%
Previous HIV test		
Yes	136	91%
No	14	9%
Previous syphilis test		
Yes	102	68%
No	48	32%
Previous STI diagnosis		
Yes	24	16%
No	126	84%
Interested in starting PrEP		
Yes	55	37%
No	95	63%

Conclusions

- The outreach programme has been effective in offering testing services to a number of clients facing significant barriers to access facility-based services, especially migrants, people living outside of Milano, and sex workers.
- Support from a peer worker was instrumental in overcoming barriers in accessing facility-based services to get early HIV diagnoses and linkage to care, as migrants.
- The programme has facilitated linkage to PrEP services, although effectiveness could not be ascertained.

Affiliations

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