

Lessons learnt from the first Australian 'pop-up' HIV testing site

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In New South Wales (NSW) Australia, evidence of ongoing transmission of HIV particularly among men who have sex with men (MSM) is a significant public health concern.^{1,2} Testing strategies that target at risk populations are an important component of HIV prevention.

In the lead up to World AIDS Day 2013, the NSW Ministry of Health, with health sector and community partners, launched the first Australian 'pop-up' HIV testing site in Darlinghurst, Sydney with the aim of raising awareness about HIV and promoting testing to MSM. The pop up testing site, staffed by a nurse and peer educators, achieved wide media coverage and attracted high risk MSM as described in a separate article in this journal.³

A key component of the evaluation of the pop-up site was to identify and document lessons learnt to inform future initiatives offering HIV testing outside traditional clinical settings in NSW. To this end, information on acceptability of the testing

site was collected via a self-administered online survey and a post-intervention debriefing with stakeholders was conducted to review implementation.

Questions on acceptability were answered by 62 (32%) of the 195 people who tested. Table 1 summarises the main results. Responses suggest that the pop-up model was highly valued and that testing for HIV in a public place in inner Sydney was generally acceptable.

Although encouraging, these results are subject to selection bias as the survey did not capture the views of all individuals who tested, nor the views of individuals who opted *not* to test.

A debriefing session with stakeholders identified a series of modifications to be explored for future pop-up testing initiatives. These included the possibility for peer educators to perform testing; securing multiple sound proof spaces to allow multiple operators to conduct concurrent testing; using existing infrastructure wherever possible to minimise costs and

Table 1. Summary of the views of people who tested at the pop up-testing site

Statement	Agreed		Uncertain		Disagreed		Total <i>n</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
It is great to be able to just walk-in and get tested	62	100	0	0	0	0	62
I would recommend this pop-up rapid HIV testing service to others	61	100	0	0	0	0	61
I would use a pop-up rapid HIV testing service again	60	98	1	2	0	0	61
The location of the pop-up service was convenient	60	97	2	3	0	0	62
The short appointment length was important to me	59	95	3	5	0	0	62
My privacy was maintained throughout the consultation	57	93	4	7	0	0	61
I felt prepared for the testing	56	91	4	7	1	2	61
I feel comfortable getting tested in a public location such as Taylor Square	42	68	15	24	5	8	62

trailing alternative pop-up models that incorporate testing for other sexually transmissible infections.

The first experience of a pop-up HIV testing model suggests that it may be a useful adjunct to clinic-based models in scaling up testing in Australia. Despite learning useful lessons from this experience, important questions remain to be addressed including: to what extent do factors such as location, opening hours, appointment length and peer educator involvement influence choices around HIV testing for gay men; are pop-up sites only effective when associated with intense promotion; and are pop-up sites feasible in festive environments where drugs and alcohol are involved? Further evaluation of testing models are needed to understand the role of pop-up sites in facilitating high testing rates among at-risk populations in Australia.

Conflicts of interest

None declared.

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