

PROVIDING ANONYMOUS,
CONFIDENTIAL AND FREE
HIV RAPID TESTING
AND COUNSELLING
FOR MEN WHO HAVE SEX
WITH MEN (MSM)



MARIA JOSÉ CAMPOS, HUGO MACHADO, JOÃO BRITO, JÚLIO ESTEVES, LUÍS MENDÃO, NUNO PINTO, RICARDO ABRANTES, RICARDO FUERTES, TIAGO RODRIGUES.

INTRODUCTION

CheckpointLX is a project of GAT (Group of Activists for the Treatment of HIV / AIDS – Pedro Santos) that offers an anonymous, confidential and free rapid HIV screening for men who have sex with men (MSM). The counselling is offered by trained MSM, promoting access to prevention and sexual health in a more effective and integrated way in the reality of the MSM community.

OBJECTIVES

According to data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), there is a progressive increase in notifications of HIV infection (2004-2009) among MSM. It is essential to carry out HIV screening and early detection of the infection.

The centre aims to increase early detection of HIV in MSM, provide specific information on HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), provide advice, peer support and referral to ensure effective access to the National Health Service of MSM with reactive result. Behavioral and epidemiological studies are planned, based on anonymous data collected through questionnaires, helping to increase the knowledge about sexual practises of MSM community in Portugal.

METHODS

CheckpointLX started on the 1st of April 2011 and is located in a district of Lisbon (Príncipe Real) traditionally regarded as an area of socialization of MSM for the concentration of bars, restaurants and nightclubs. The rapid test is being actively promoted in bars, saunas, outdoor cruising areas and gay –organised social on-line networks.

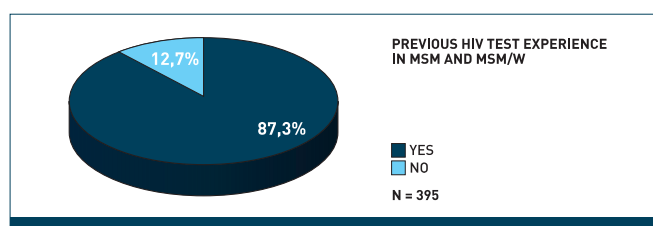
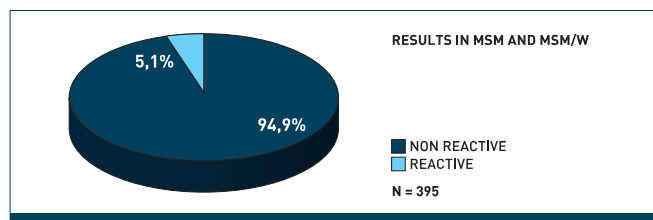
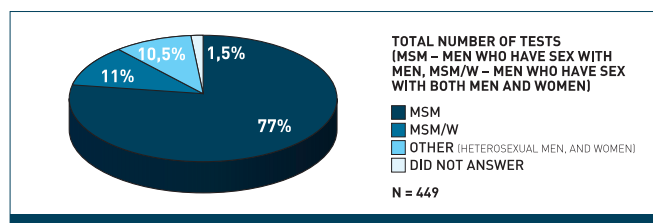
The target group of this center is men who have sex with men (MSM), an expression that UNAIDS and World Health Organization use to account for the social group of men with different experiences, lifestyles, behaviours and risks associated with HIV / AIDS: from gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual or heterosexual men.

The test used is Retrocheck HIV - a rapid third generation immunochromatographic test device for simultaneous detection of antibodies specific to HIV 1/2 in whole blood. There is a facultative questionnaire to collect anonymous data during counselling regarding sexual behaviour and practises.

RESULTS

Between the 1st April to the 31st August 2011, the number of HIV tests carried out in CheckpointLX was 449. Of this total, 346 (77%) were in men who have sex with men (MSM), 49 (11%) were in men who have sex with both men and women (MSM/W), 47 (10.5%) in heterosexual men and women, and 7 (1.5%) did not reveal sexual behaviour.

For MSM and MSM/W there was a total of 395 tests, the mean age was 31.4 years, the median was 31 years, with a standard deviation of 9.27 years. Regarding test experience in the past, 345 (87,3%) had had the test before and 50 (12,7%) were having the test for the first time. From the ones who had had the test before, the year of the last test (N = 371, missing = 78) was 2011 for 91 (20,3%), 2010 for 166 (37%), and 2009 for 50 (11,1%). The result was non-reactive in 375 (94.9%) tests and reactive in 20 (5,1%) tests.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

After only 5 months, the project is reaching the target group with 88% of tests in MSM and MSM/W. This shows a high degree of proximity to MSM and MSM/W of this community centre, validating both location and philosophy of the service.

The reactive tests rate is high (5,1%) in this target group and we will continue to develop strategies to reach more untested MSM and to work towards early detection of HIV infection.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS



CONTACT

Travessa do Monte do Carmo N^o2
1200-277 Lisboa Lisbon, Portugal
geral@checkpointlx.com
www.checkpointlx.com