Acceptability & Affordability of Self HIV Testing in an Urban Neighborhood With 3% Seroprevalence

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BACKGROUND

The USFDA recently approved the "OraQuick® In-Home HIV Test," the first over-the-counter self test for HIV, which retails for approximately US $40. Little is known about the self test's acceptability, accessibility and affordability in the United States' most heavily impacted neighborhoods and among individuals at highest risk for acquiring HIV.

METHODOLOGY

We explored acceptability, accessibility and affordability of self testing among 994 community residents participating in a community-based HIV and HCV testing, treatment and linkage to care program called Do One Thing. Do One Thing takes place in a Philadelphia zipcode with 3% HIV seroprevalence and limited HIV testing and treatment services. We conducted a survey about HIV risk behaviors, demographics and attitudes related to self HIV testing, including willingness to use and pay for self tests, and whether individuals would seek medical care if they were to test positive.

RESULTS

HIV seropositivity among this population was 1.2%. Participants reported high-risk behaviors; 23% were engaged in concurrent sexual partnerships, 24% believed their partners were engaged in concurrent partnerships and 15% reported injection drug use or cocaine use. Eleven percent were men who have sex with men and 88% were African American. Participants also reported socioeconomic factors frequently correlated with HIV infection; 39% were uninsured, 56% lived below the poverty line, and 37% had incarceration histories. Participants had very positive attitudes about self HIV testing and linkage to care (Figure 1). The overwhelming majority was willing to self test (91%) and also believed their families, friends or loved ones would be willing to self test (78%). Almost all participants reported they would seek medical care if they were to test HIV-positive (96%). Although most were willing to pay for the test (57%), only 26% of participants were willing to pay more than $20 and only 14% were willing to pay the current market price.

CONCLUSIONS

Self-testing was highly acceptable in this neighborhood with high rates of HIV infection and most respondents reported they would seek medical care if they tested positive. The self test is an important tool for expanding access to testing in heavily impacted neighborhoods but its price may be prohibitively expensive for the highest risk populations. Public health programs should consider financing self-testing and linkage to care programs in heavily impacted neighborhoods.

Figure 1. Attitudes about home-based HIV testing in a Philadelphia neighborhood with high rates of HIV infection (N=1,130)

Attitudes about home-based testing	Answer	%
If we provided your friends, family, or loved ones with a free, home-based HIV test kit, how likely would they be to take the test?	Very likely	43%
	Likely	35%
	Neutral	8%
	Unlikely	12%
	Very unlikely	2%
If we provided you with a free, home-based HIV test kit, how likely would you be to take the test?	Very likely	55%
	Likely	35%
	Neutral	2%
	Unlikely	6%
	Very unlikely	2%
How likely would you be to buy a home-based HIV test kit at your local pharmacy?	Very likely	21%
	Likely	36%
	Neutral	7%
	Unlikely	21%
	Very unlikely	15%
How much would you be willing to pay for a home-based HIV test at your local pharmacy?	Not interested in buying a home-based HIV test kit	28%
	$0-10	19%
	$11-20	27%
	$21-30	9%
	$31-40	3%
	$41-49	5%
	More than $50	9%
If you took a home-based HIV test and tested positive, how likely would you be to go to the doctor afterwards?	Very likely	89%
	Likely	6%
	Neutral	2%
	Unlikely	1%
	Very unlikely	1%

Demographics	Answer	%
Gender	Male	54%
	Female	46%
Self-identified sexual orientation	Heterosexual	88%
	Gay/Lesbian	5%
	Bisexual	7%
Race	African American	86%
	African	4%
	White	6%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
	Asian	1%
	Bi-racial or multi-racial	2%
	Other	2%
Household income	Less than $14,999	52%
	$15,000 to $29,999	17%
	$30,000 or more	15%
	Decline to Answer	16%
Health insurance status	Insured	60%
	Uninsured	40%

