Uptake of HIV self-testing amongst youth in tertiary education colleges in Zimbabwe

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BACKGROUND

- Youth have the highest incidence of HIV in sub Saharan Africa, however, youth have the lowest rates of HIV testing.
- HIV self-testing may help remove barriers to facility based testing.
- We assess the uptake of a HIV oral mucosal transudate (OMT) self-testing amongst youth attending tertiary level colleges in Zimbabwe

METHODS

- Youth aged 16-24 years of age, of unknown HIV status and not having had a HIV test in the past 3 months,
- Participants chose to test on-site in a private booth or offsite at a location of their choice.
- From 16th July 2019, blood based confirmatory testing was offered on site using SD Standard Q HIV ½ Ab 4-Line® and Chembio HIV ½ Stat-Pak® in parallel
- Linkage to care (either confirmation of reactive test or attendance for ART initiation) was determined through phone call follow up.

RESULTS

- Over 57 days in a three month period, 2,760 youth received a HIV self-test kit
- 1637 (59%) reported their results
- 29 (1.8%) were reactive,6 reported confirmatory testing off site, 5 had confirmatory testing on site (n=4 of positive, n=1 negative), 2 refused confirmatory testing on site, the remainder were unreachable through phone contact.

Baseline characteristics N=2760	N (%)
Females	1310 (63%)
Median age,(IQR), y	21 (20-23)
Previous HIV test	1843 (67%)
Ever heard of HIV self-test	1206 (44%)
Ever had sex	1792 (65%)
No .of partners in the past one year, median (IQR)	1 (1-2)
Condom use at last sex	1140 (65%)
Family planning use amongst females	145 (14%)
VMMC in males	293 (30%)
Ever exchanged gifts/money for sex	145 (8%)
Tested off-site	1592 (58%)





CONCLUSIONS

- Community based HIV self-test distribution in tertiary colleges is an opportunity to reach youth who may be at risk of HIV acquisition.
- Offering confirmatory testing onsite may improve linkage to HIV treatment services
- Given the low HIV prevalence (1.8%), linkage to prevention services is key for those testing negative.
- Further research needs to invest in ensuring seamless linkage to care for those testing reactive.

