High burden of untreated HIV in Malawian fishermen: prospective data from a cluster randomized trial

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Augustine T. Choko[1, 2], Kathryn L. Dovel[3, 4], Sekeleghe Kayuni[5], Donaldson Conserve[6], Anthony Buttterworth[1], Amaya Bustinduy[7], J. Russel Stothard[2], Wala Kamchedzera[1], Madalo Mukoka-Thindwa[1], James Jafali[1], Peter MacPherson[1, 8], Katherine Fielding[7], Nicola Desmond[1, 2], Elizabeth L Corbett[1, 7]

1. Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Programme, Malawi 2. Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK 3. University of California, United States of America
4. Partners in Hope, Malawi 5. Medical Aid Society of Malawi, Malawi 6. George Washington University, USA 7. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK 8. University of Glasgow, Scotland

BACKGROUND

- Despite ubiquitous progress in ART global scale up and significant reductions in mortality and morbidity, some populations such as fishing communities in Africa continue to lag behind.
- We investigated the prevalence of, and factors associated with untreated HIV among fishermen using prospective data from a cluster randomized trial from Mangochi, Malawi.

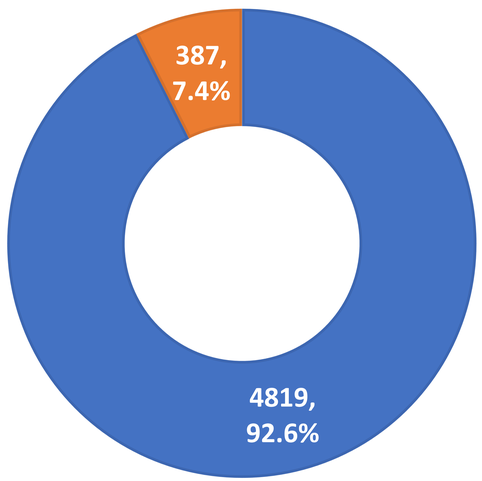
METHODS

This is analysis of prospective cross-sectional data collected between March 2022-January 2023 during the "creating demand for Fishermen's Schistosomiasis and HIV services (FISH)" cluster randomised trial.

- Data came from 45 lakeside "boat-teams" (clusters) in southern Lake Malawi from three trial arms.
- We estimated the prevalence and Binomial Exact 95% confidence intervals (CI) of untreated HIV among the whole population and among fishermen who tested HIV positive in the study.
- Random effects logistic regression accounting for clustering were used to examine associations.



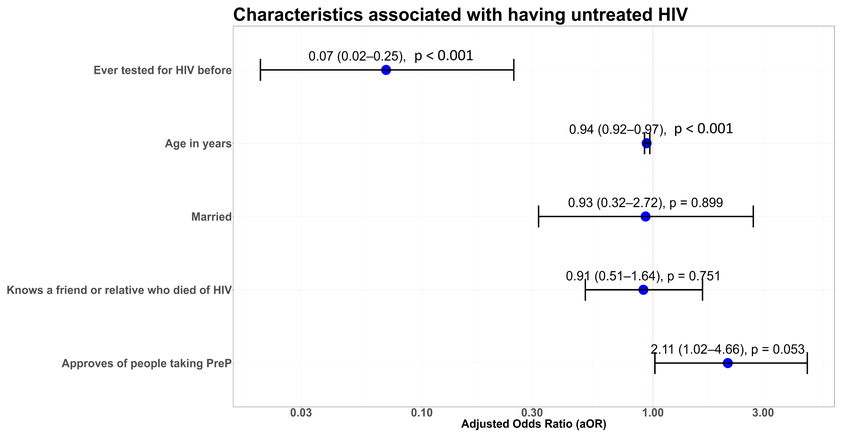
RESULTS



A total of **5206** fishermen were enrolled from 45 clusters, with up to **387 (7.43%)** testing HIV positive.

Prevalence of untreated HIV was 113/5206 (2.2%, 95%CI: 1.8; 2.6%) in the whole sample and 113/387 (29.2%, 95% CI: 24.9; 33.9%) among those who tested HIV positive in the study.

Prevalence of untreated HIV was high; 29.2% among those who tested positive in the study



- Having a previous HIV test was significantly associated with reduced odds of having untreated HIV both in unadjusted OR 0.05 (95%CI: 0.01; 0.16) and aOR 0.07 (95%CI: 0.02; 0.25) when adjusted for age, marital status and HIV knowledge variables .
- Intra-cluster correlation coefficient was 0.12.

CONCLUSIONS

- Not testing for HIV and increasing age were strongly associated with having untreated HIV
- The findings encourage sustained investments in interventions to expand coverage of HIV testing in underserved populations.

CORRESPONDENCE

Augustine T Choko, PhD
Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Programme
augutc@gmail.com