



HIV TESTING AS AN ENABLER FOR STIGMA REDUCTION

HIV PREVENTION ENGLAND - HIV STIGMA SYMPOSIUM

Aymara Social Enterprise
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- Stigma vs discrimination
- The relationship between HIV testing, stigma and health services
- Social stigma and self- stigma as barriers to HIV testing
- The impact of stigma on HIV testing decisions
- Home HIV testing can help remove stigma

Stigma vs discrimination

HIV stigma is all about negative attitudes and beliefs about people living with HIV. Most common examples:

- Believing that **only certain groups** of people can get HIV
- Making **moral judgments** about people who take steps to prevent HIV
- Feeling that **people deserve to get HIV** because of their choices

Discrimination is the behaviours that result from those attitudes or beliefs:

- Refusing to **provide care** or services to a person living with HIV
- Refusing **casual contact** with someone living with HIV
- Socially **isolating** someone because they are HIV positive

The relationship between HIV testing, stigma and health service usage

HIV stigma and discrimination affect the emotional wellbeing and mental health of people living with HIV. People may be reluctant to test because a positive HIV test result may lead to the loss of friends, family, employment

People often try to avoid HIV stigma by **seeking a psychological coverage through HIV testing in a trusted community organisation**. The offering of other healthcare services also stimulates the interest of people for testing



Therefore, HIV testing is one the main enablers for people who suffer stigma to seeking overall care, which results in a healthier population

Social stigma and self-stigma as barriers to HIV testing

Social stigma causes individuals to avoid HIV testing. Evidenced solutions:

- **Lived experience role model.** A simple message (blame & shame free) shared by local social leaders or trusted community organisations can help individuals overcome the stigma barrier and result in more testing
- **Education.** The information intervention, in the form of culturally specific prevention and promotion campaigns, leads to more HIV testing among those who had overestimated stigma
- **Empowering activities.** Joining a community group, and engaging and having fun with its member, raises awareness about healthy habits and encourages people to test for HIV and connect with the health system

The impact of stigma on HIV testing decisions

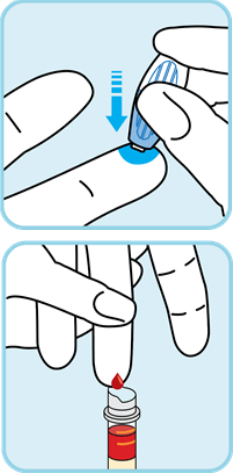
Considerations when promoting HIV testing amongst GBMSM:

- Need for interventions to **challenge** the ‘promiscuity’ **stereotype**
- Provide safe, confidential and **specialised** (lived experience) **support**
- Integrate **family as a support network** for inclusion and regular testing

Considerations when promoting HIV testing amongst heterosexuals:

- Take a **gender-based approach**, different for men and women, as due to self-stigma, men are less likely to test for HIV compared with women
- Men’s testing decisions are based on individual's perceptions of stigma, women’s testing behaviours are more influenced by community beliefs

Home HIV testing can help remove stigma – breaking the barriers in partnership with VCSE



- **Access** to service for non-English speakers & non-IT literate users
- **Sample** management (instructions and the amount of blood)
- **Waiting time** management and anxiety
- **Communication** of reactive results

- **Training** for phlebotomist
- Barriers to **consent**
- Specialised **support** provision
- Newly diagnosed vs **previously diagnosed**





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