Background

- Rapid point-of-care (POC) testing plays a critical role in identifying persons with HIV infection who might be missed with traditional laboratory tests in clinical settings.
- The role of different POC rapid HIV testing technologies – tests that deliver results in 60-seconds, or those that test results that return in 15 minutes or greater – is currently being investigated to better link care to those at diagnosis.

Methods

- We used data from the MSM (men who have sex with men) and Transgender (TG) Testing Initiative, an HIV testing project conducted in 25 cities across the US during 2013-2015. Goals of the project were to identify MSM and TG with previously undiagnosed HIV infection, and link them to medical care within 90 days of diagnosis.
- All participants were eligible if they were: at least 13 years of age, provided informed consent, and were willing to undergo HIV testing. Those who had been previously diagnosed chose to be tested. Because it was impossible to know which participants were previously diagnosed, this could not be removed from the analysis and may have biased the results.

Results

- The role of different POC rapid HIV testing technologies – tests that deliver results in 60-seconds, or those that test results that return in 15 minutes or greater – is currently being investigated to better link care to those at diagnosis.

Conclusions

- Test type was related to linkage to care, and varied depending on where testing events took place.
- In public areas/bars/large events, 60-second tests were associated with higher linkage compared to 15 minute or greater tests.
- In community-based organization locales, linkage to care was lower for those tested with 60-second tests compared with 15 minute or greater tests.

Limitations

- In settings such as public areas/bars and events where MSM with HIV infection may risk being linked to medical care, a 60-second POC test could be beneficial for providing immediate linkage to care.
- Additional research should investigate how test type and settings affect linkage to care.

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Elizabeth A DiNenno

Abt Associates, the staff from each participating MTI site that contributed to this project.

Do point-of-care HIV testing technologies affect linkage to care? Results from a large-scale US HIV testing initiative

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Summary and Discussion

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Limitations

- Infection status is uncertain for participants in this analysis, whom a rapid HIV test result was positive but Western Blot test was negative.
- MTI matches were related to persons who reported being HIV-negative; however an evaluation using HIV surveillance data revealed that some persons who had been previously diagnosed chose to be tested. Because it was impossible to know which participants were previously diagnosed, this could not be removed from the analysis and may have biased the results.

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