IF NOT FOR ONLINE TESTING, I WOULD NEVER GET TESTED:

Willingness for online HIV testing among app-using YMSM in Bangkok

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BACKGROUND

Among YMSM in Bangkok

HIV

Prevalence 12%
Incidence 12%

Van Griensven, F. et al., 2013 & Thai National AIDS Committee, 2015
73% Never get tested*

*Weiss, Jonas and Guadamuz, 2017

- The high level of risk-taking behaviors in YMSM
- Most of YMSM do not even know their status
- HIV stigmatization among health care providers toward YMSM
- Barrier to HIV testing in Thailand
Reasons for Never tested

- Not knowing where to get tested
- No time to visit testing site
- Complicated process
- Embarrassment of the people
- Fear of positive results
- Risk of being stigmatized as promiscuous

Challenges from HIV testing in Clinic and hospital

- Wait time is too long
- Too many people
- Health staff not friendly or sensitive
- Risk of encountering someone they know
- Concerns of confidentiality
- Risk of being stigmatized

Guadamuz et al., 2015 & Logie, Newman and Weaver, 2016
Other testing modalities, like anonymous self-testing, may be an important alternative in Thai society.

**OBJECTIVE**

This study examined the willingness for online HIV testing (OHT) among app-using YMSM in Bangkok, Thailand.
METHODOLOGY
Mixed methods
(Qualitative and Quantitative) among YMSM

Survey
(n=1,394)

8 Focus Groups
(n=48)
Qualitative Research

Systematic mapping of all websites and mobile applications where YMSM age 18-24 congregate

8 focus group discussions (FGDs), with a total of 48 participants

Central | Suburban Bangkok

2 FGDs students
2 FGDs non-students
2 FGDs students
2 FGDs non-students
Facebook Ads

Facebook Fanpages
GAY APPLICATIONS

Recruitment Strategies
Participants in quantitative research

8,000 clicks to take survey

- >5,000 Disqualify
- >3,000 Age more than 24 or less than 18
- >600 Never have Sex
- >1,000 Don't stay in BKK

1,200 Not complete

1,394 Finish

- Final sample -

70% From Blued + Hornet

30% From Facebook
If you have an opportunity to perform self testing at home with an online nurse, would you be interested?

Yes

No

https://maastrichtuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ba6Kr89b5iNX83P
RESULTS

87% 1,217 from 1,394 of participants were willing to test online
# Quantitative Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Interested N=1217 (87.3%)</th>
<th>Non-interested N=177 (12.7%)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>269 (22.1%)</td>
<td>46 (26.0%)</td>
<td>0.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>565 (46.4%)</td>
<td>75 (42.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>383 (31.5%)</td>
<td>56 (31.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently studying</td>
<td>839 (68.9%)</td>
<td>126 (71.2%)</td>
<td>0.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never tested for HIV</td>
<td>596 (46.7%)</td>
<td>68 (38.4%)</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceived risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>104 (8.6%)</td>
<td>14 (7.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium risk</td>
<td>283 (23.2%)</td>
<td>40 (22.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low risk</td>
<td>587 (48.2%)</td>
<td>69 (39.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at risk</td>
<td>43 (20.0%)</td>
<td>54 (30.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Quantitative Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<th>Non-interested N-177 (12.7%)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of male casual partners in the last 1 year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>356 (29.2%)</td>
<td>68 (38.4%)</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 partners</td>
<td>124 (10.2%)</td>
<td>22 (12.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 partners</td>
<td>315 (25.9%)</td>
<td>31 (17.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 partners or more</td>
<td>422 (34.7%)</td>
<td>56 (31.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used condoms during anal intercourse in the last 3 months</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>112 (12.9%)</td>
<td>16 (13.8%)</td>
<td>0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>300 (34.6%)</td>
<td>30 (25.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>456 (52.5%)</td>
<td>70 (60.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Having anal or vagina sex in the last 3 months</strong></td>
<td>856 (70.4%)</td>
<td>106 (59.9%)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated in group sex activities</td>
<td>322 (26.5%)</td>
<td>45 (25.4%)</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given, received gifts or opportunities for sex exchange</td>
<td>316 (26.0%)</td>
<td>45 (25.4%)</td>
<td>0.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seek partners online</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0.007</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>228 (18.8%)</td>
<td>51 (28.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td><strong>660 (54.2%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>84 (47.5%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>329 (27.0%)</td>
<td>42 (23.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used drugs before or during anal intercourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1154 (94.8%)</td>
<td>168 (94.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>56 (4.6%)</td>
<td>6 (3.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>7 (0.6%)</td>
<td>3 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Not willing to test online

- Fear of needles/ pain
- Don’t have the skills to properly use needle, think this option is for health professionals only
- Concerns about people who test positive can lead to stress, depression, and thoughts of suicide
- Fear of being walked in during the online test
- Want to take test by themselves, don’t want nurse/counselor together during time of online testing
“If the test is positive then he will need support from the nurse. What if he cannot take it and commit suicide?”

FGD YMSM (student)

“I’m terrified of needles. I cannot take the test by myself what if I don’t stop bleeding”

FGD YMSM (Non-student)

“I am afraid to be walked in on by my friends because I do not live alone. They also ask a lot of questions. I am too embarrassed to talk about the test”

FGD YMSM (student)
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
Willing to test online

- Thailand should have as many options as possible for everyone to easily and confidently acquire an HIV test.

- Online HIV testing can help them confidently get tested without time limitation, concern about privacy and discrimination.

- Very fast because the timeframe of testing no longer than 1 hour.

- Desire to choose this option because it’s very easy, private and convenient.
“Going to the clinic should **not be the only option.**
I have been at the testing clinic and saw someone I know
and so decided to go home without testing”

FGD YMSM (Non-student)

“I would love **friendly nurses**
who make me
**feel comfortable**
during the test”

FGD YMSM (Student)

“I will even pay money to do
online testing, I think this option
it’s very easy, fast
and very private”

FGD YMSM (Non-student)
DISCUSSIONS

Online HIV testing is very consistent with youth lifestyle

This option is appropriate with young in Generation Z/ or Gen ME

HIV stigma is very high in Thai society

Online HIV testing is also appropriate for Thai society because there is heightened HIV stigma and a "culture of gossip" among health care providers and YMSM*

In this study it is seen that people who are interested in getting tested are people who have never been tested for HIV, sexually active, have many sexual partners and seek partners online.

Online HIV testing option is therefore very appropriate for people who have high risk due to the fact this group entails a very high stigma (Social stigma and internal stigma).
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Having multiple options for YMSM, who are clearly at very high risk for HIV, is critical if we want to reach the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets
- These contexts may be similar to neighboring ASEAN member countries
- Online HIV testing should be made more widely available to help increase testing among high-risk populations
- Other STI's (like Syphilis, Hepatitis B) should be accessible online as well