Six years of out reach testing- Does it work?

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Introduction

STI diagnoses in MSM have been increasing dramatically in Northern Ireland since 2006 [1]. Enhanced surveillance of an Hepatitis A outbreak in Northern Ireland highlighted attendance at two sex on premises venues (SOPV) as possible locations of transmission. In response, public health funding was given to pilot a new outreach service in conjunction with LGBT non government organisation (NGO) in order to reach men not attending traditional testing services. The aim was to interrupt transmission earlier and increase regular testing in MSM in NI. BASHH recommends MSM at high risk of STI test every 3 months and all MSM test at least annually [2].

Method

A memorandum of understanding was agreed between NHS staff, NGO and venue owners. Protocols were developed and monthly events rotating to 2 SOPVs (sauna A, sauna B) and LGBT centre began. Also annual pride testing was included. Events were advertised by the NGO with web based question and answer sessions to explain to process. Two doctors, a nurse and the NGO sexual health worker attend each clinic. Clients are informed at entrance that the clinic is running and have free entry if they decide to attend (usually £7-12 fee). The SOPV managers have been very supportive of the clinics. Testing support for those attending is provided by NGO. People attending for testing have medical and sexual history including risk assessment collected.

They are offered

- serological testing HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis B & C
- self collected, triple site Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea (CT/GC)

PCR

Vaccination Hepatitis A&B

Sexual risk, STI protection, availability of post exposure prophylaxis for HIV, and methods of obtaining results and follow up are discussed. The cost per patient attending is £110.

Fig 1 Reported sexual history over time

Results

Over 6yrs, 79 sessions

- 31 sessions sauna A
- 23 ‘hardcore’ sauna B
- 19 LGBT
- 5 pride

1305 assessments were made over this time in 852 individuals, 226 pts have attended more than once, with 34 attending 6 or more times ie at least once/year.

Ages of attendees were16-83yrs, mean 31.3yrs, median 28yrs
 Sauna A 16-83yrs, mean 38.5yrs, median 37yrs
 Sauna B 17-80yrs, mean 40.8yrs, median 41
 LGBT 17-71, mean 31.2yrs, median 28yrs
 Pride 17-60, mean 31yrs, median 27.5yrs

References

- STI surveillance report 2016, PHA
- BASHH MSM testing guideline
- BASHH outreach standards

Fig 2 % Hepatitis A+B vaccine use over time

424 (68%) of first time attendees had never attended GUM clinic

Overall 391 (62%) of first attendees had never had HIV test
 HIV never testers decreased from 34% 2009 to 14% 2014 (fig 3).

In total 494 vaccines administered, the majority given in the first 2yrs (fig 2).

Infections diagnosed

- 13 (1.5%) HIV
- 61 (7.1%) untreated syphilis (46 early)
- 4 (0.4%) chronic active hepatitis B
- 63 (7.3%) Chlamydia (21 UR, 36 rec, 6 Th)
- 48 (5.6%) Gonorrhoea (3 UR,18 rec, 27 Th)

All patients with infection were contacted and attended for management at GUM clinic

Fig 3 HIV testing frequency over time

Discussion:

Barriers to STI and HIV testing in Northern Ireland remain. 68% of men attending outreach clinic had never attended GUM services. In the first year of outreach very few had been vaccinated for either hepatitis A or B, 62% had never HIV tested and 38% reported receptive anal sex, almost half condomless. The outreach program is a very important initiative, reaching high risk men who very often would not otherwise have been tested. Over time less vaccines were required as the number of never accessing services decreased. The percentage of HIV 'never testers' dropped from 34% to14% and 6mthly testing increased from 13% to 45% in line with BASHH recommendation for high risk MSM. There was a high number of infections diagnosed in these asymptomatic men and all attended NHS GUM clinic for management and follow up., Good visibility reduces periods of undiagnosed infection. The outreach has increased access and raised the profile of the health services offered by the local genitourinary medicine clinic. The men attending the clinic found it to be beneficial and welcoming, and all would recommend it to others. It is cost effective and efficient. The clinic has helped to develop partnerships with the NGO and we acknowledge Rainbow for their collaboration.