

HIV rapid test plus linkage to care program in Argentina: experience from a NGO.

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Background

According to the Argentina's Ministry of Health report of 2018, HIV prevalence in adults is 0.4%, 80% out of them are diagnosed and 83.5% of them are on antiretroviral treatment. Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF) is committed with the 90-90-90 proposal by UNAIDS and carrying on since 2013 annual prevalence assessments based on rapid testing programs and linking to care for those with positive results.

Therefore, the complete information available for 2018 is presented.

Results

Determinations were made in 54625 subjects. Age range: 18 months to over 49 years. Gender distribution: women 61.4%, men 38%, transgender 0.6%. It was the first HIV test for 58.4%.

There were 477 HIV positive results. Prevalence: 0.87% (95%CI: 0.80-0.95).

Prevalence was significantly higher in transgender and in men than in women (1.68%, 1.62%, and 0.40%, respectively; $p < 0.001$).

There was a greater probability of having a positive test in men who had sex with men (OR: 6.11 - 95%CI: 4.57-8.16; $p < 0.001$) and people between 25 and 49 years-old (OR: 1.63 - 95%CI: 1.35-1.97; $p < 0.001$).

In terms of linkage to care, 263 subjects were linked to an AHF-supported facility and 161 were linked to a non-AHF facility. In total, 88.9% of subjects with positive results were linked to the health system.

Methods

Between January 2, 2018 and December 30, 2018, HIV antibody determinations were performed in individuals from ten different provinces of Argentina, which together represent more than 60% of the total country population (Figure 1), through a previously validated rapid test (Alere Determine™ HIV-1/2).

Counselling was given to all people. For positive cases, the referral for confirmation and linkage to care was made through a program using case managers in charge of accompanying patients until the third visit in their health system. The information was collected in an Ad Hoc database. T, Chi², Fisher exact or Mid P tests and maximum likelihood odds ratios were used as appropriate.

Figure 1. Districts in which HIV determinations were performed during 2018.



Conclusions

HIV prevalence observed in this population was twice as high as that reported by the Ministry of Health for the adult general population of Argentina.

Linkage to care mediated by AHF was high, but continuous efforts should be maintained to reach the percentages recommended by UNAIDS.