

HIV rapid testing at AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam

COVID19 effect on the services

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Background

By the end of 2018, an estimated 1,900 people are thought to be unaware of their HIV status in the Netherlands. A significant percentage of people who initiated ART are known to be born outside the Netherlands (40%). This group faces more barriers reaching HIV services and is more likely to present late for HIV-care. AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam provides community-based, free, 'walk-in', rapid HIV testing on-site and off-site (pop-up locations) to overcome barriers to test and reach high-risk groups including MSM and migrant populations. Due to COVID-19 AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam operations were suspended on 26th March 2020 and reopened with stronger safety measures on 11th May 2020.

Methods

We studied a dynamic cohort of people who used our facility from January 1st till September 21st of 2020 with a specific focus on data between May 11th till September 21st when contact-based services across the Netherlands were allowed again. AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam introduced additional safety measures and implemented an appointment-based system. After May 11th WhatsApp for scheduling appointments and performing pre-test counseling and screening was introduced.



Results

Between January and September 21st, 1190 people were tested for HIV with a total of 7 reactive cases (0.6% positivity rate). 843 (71%) people who tested were of non-Dutch origin. After May 2020, AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam performed approximately 45% of tests carried on-site in comparison to the same time in 2019. Between May 11th and September 21st, a total of 482 people tested for HIV. Among this group 3 reactive cases were detected (positivity rate 0.6%).

Of the total number of people tested, 249 (52%) were MSM and 329 (68%) indicated being of non-Dutch origin. Out of the non-Dutch group 158 (48%) were MSM and 4 (1%) transgender. The 3 reactive cases belonged to the non-Dutch group, 2 were MSM and 1 transgender. Positivity rate among the non-Dutch group was 0.9%. Two clients were successfully linked to care, the third opted for self-linkage.

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep*	total	proportion
Origin							
Dutch	22	32	41	30	29	154	31,1%
Non-Dutch	36	72	70	86	65	329	68,1%
Total	58	104	111	116	94	483	100%

Table. 1 AHF CP Amsterdam's testing numbers during the COVID-19 epidemic.



	Total population (n=482)	Reactive (Positivity rate)
Sexual Orientation		
MSM	249 (52%)	2 (0,8%)
Non-MSM	232 (54,1%)	0 (0%)
Transgender	4 (1%)	1 (25%)
	Total Non-Dutch population (n=329)	Reactive (Positivity rate)
Origin + Sexual orientation		
Non-Dutch + MSM	158 (48%)	2 (1,3%)
Non-Dutch + Transgender	4 (1%)	1 (25%)

Table 2. Characteristics of sexual orientation and origin.

Conclusion

AHF Checkpoint Amsterdam was able to reintroduce its services in a safe manner to the population. The introduction of low-threshold appointment scheduling and pre-test consultation through WhatsApp successfully supported the continuation of the services fulfilling the goal to reach key affected communities. There is a need to promote community-level services to continue HIV testing in order to reach the goal of zero new HIV infections in the Netherlands.