Background

Increasing serostatus awareness may reduce the number of new HIV infections.

- Of the estimated 1.1 million people infected with HIV in the United States, about 25% are unaware of their infection.
- Up to half of all new HIV cases may result from transmission from a sero-unaware individual.

African Americans and Latinos are increasingly becoming the most vulnerable demographic groups affected by HIV.

- In 2011, African Americans had the highest rate of HIV infections for any demographic group at 966 per 100,000 persons in Los Angeles (LA).
- In addition, African American men who have sex with men (MSM) in LA are four times more likely than white MSMs to not know they are infected.

Self-testing presents a new method of increasing serostatus awareness.

- Of 76 MSM surveyed in LA, an at-home, immediate, and free HIV test had the highest acceptability.
- In 2012, the FDA approved the OraQuick® In-Home HIV Test, which allows for private, rapid self-testing at home, and helps to overcome stigma, which is a major barrier to testing.

Promotion of HIV self-test kits among African American and Latino MSM in LA may increase serostatus awareness and reduce the number of new infections.

Methods

Social Media Advertising

- An advertisement publicizing free HIV self-test kits was placed on Grindr™, a geosocial networking smartphone application popular with MSM, from April 17 to May 29, 2014.
- The advertisement campaign consisted of 300,000 banner ad impressions and four broadcast messages targeting high-risk HIV incidence areas in Los Angeles.

Redemption System

- Those who clicked on the advertisement were linked to http://freehivselftests.weebly.com/ to choose a method of self-test delivery: USPIS® mail, a Walgreens® voucher, or from a vending machine.
- Interested users were invited to take a baseline survey to determine eligibility for our study.

Self-Test Delivery

- USPIS® mail: Tests were sent via Priority Mail® to user-provided mailing addresses.
- Walgreens® vouchers: We emailed users printable vouchers redeemable at 12 local Walgreens® stores.
- Vending machine: Users were sent a unique, one-time use code redeemable at a local UCQapp™ smart vending machine.

Follow-Up Survey

- We invited eligible users to take an online survey on testing experiences two weeks after test delivery.
- Eligible participants were African American or Latino, MSM, and ≥ 18 years of age.
- Survey data was encoded using SurveyMonkey and analyzed with Microsoft Excel.

Results

- Of the 122 study participants, 91% reported at least one episode of condomless anal sex in the past 3 months, 28% last tested for HIV over a year ago, and 11% had never tested.

- During the campaign, the website received 11,909 unique visits (average: 284 per day) and 334 test requests.

- Of the 334 test requests: → 227 (67%) were requests for mailed tests; → 99 (30%) were for vouchers; → 11 (3%) were to use the vending machine.

Future Directions

- Because of the high demand for the program (more than 50 test requests per week), evaluation is ongoing.
- Because of the high preference for test delivery via USPIS® mail, we have developed a simpler mail system in partnership with Walgreens.com.

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