Factors associated with disclosure of known HIV-positive status in a facility-based index testing program in Telangana, India

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BACKGROUND

- India has the 2nd highest number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) globally. The state of Telangana has a substantial HIV burden within the country
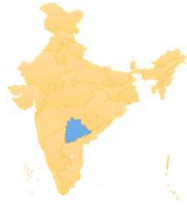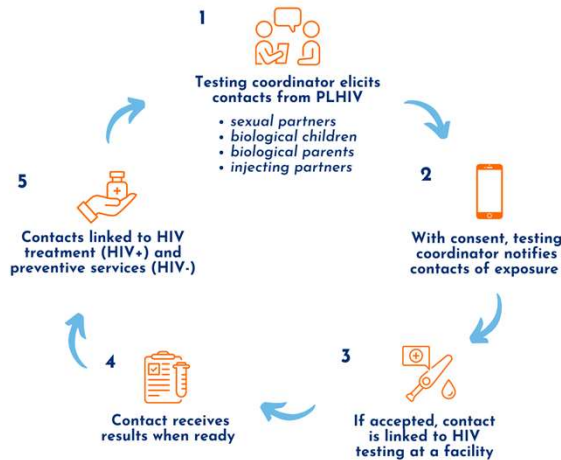
- Disclosure of HIV-positive status is important to rapidly identify those infected with HIV, link them to care, and prevent onward transmission

- Fear of discrimination, blame, and disruption of family relationships can make disclosure a difficult decision for PLHIV

- We characterize factors associated with disclosure of known HIV-positive status by contacts to index clients

METHODS

- Index testing is a WHO-endorsed form of contact tracing. The exposed contacts (sexual partners, spouse, children, needle-sharing partners) of an HIV-positive person are elicited and offered HIV testing

- It is an effective approach to identify contacts of PLHIV and initiate new HIV diagnosis on antiretroviral therapy

- From July 2020 to September 2022, project ACCELERATE implemented index testing in 50 HIV testing and treatment facilities in Telangana

- Contacts with previous HIV diagnosis were categorized by if the index client was aware of their HIV status

- Associations between disclosure of HIV-positive status and contact characteristics were evaluated using logistic regression

Disclosure of HIV-positive status to index clients is more common among women, spouses, and less common for older contacts

Figure 1: Index testing process flow

RESULTS

- We identified 25,883 contacts. 792 contacts self-reported their HIV-positive status to the counsellors, who were elicited from 714 indexes

- The mean age among contacts who reported their HIV-positive status to a counsellors was 31.89, and 60% were female

- Overall, 84% were reported as HIV-positive by the index client

- 85% were married to the index client, 6% were non-spousal sexual partners, and 9% were biological children

Table 1: Characteristics of HIV-positive contacts

	All	Disclosed	Not Disclosed
HIV-positive status	792	665 (84%)	127 (16%)
Age			
Mean		33	28
Sex			
Male	321 (41%)	253 (79%)	68 (21%)
Female	471 (59%)	412 (87%)	59 (13%)
Contact type			
Children	74 (9%)	32 (43%)	42 (57%)
Sexual partner	46 (6%)	33 (72%)	13 (28%)
Spouse	672 (85%)	600 (89%)	72 (11%)

- Among adult contacts, disclosure was significantly more common for spouses [AOR vs. sexual partners: 3.03], and women [AOR vs. male clients: 1.48]; and less common for older contacts [AOR per 5 years, 0.88; p<0.05 for all]

- Of the 792 HIV-positive contacts, 74% were on ART at the time of elicitation, 15% were linked to ART after counseling, and 11% have not yet been linked to ART

CONCLUSIONS

- Although the index testing program showed high levels of disclosure, we discovered certain areas where gaps exist

- Index clients were less likely to be aware of the HIV positive status of older and non-spousal contacts

- Male partners were more likely to withhold disclosure from partners indicating a need to better understand what motivates males to share or withhold their status from their partners

- HIV disclosure plays a vital role in HIV prevention. Counseling should address the fear of disclosure and potential negative consequences such as stigma and discrimination

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