HIV PREVENTION AMONG MSM IN JAPAN: CURRENT OPINIONS ON ACHIEVING THE FIRST 90 AMONG JAPANESE MSM

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BACKGROUND

Japan is a developed nation with an HIV epidemic concentrated among men who have sex with men (MSM). Despite success in exceeding the second and third UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets, Japan has lagged behind on first 90. Approximately 30% of newly reported cases have been annually identified by AIDS onset[2], implying reaching subpopulations for early HIV testing remains primary challenge.

RESULTS

In 2019, interviews were conducted with medical professionals at AIDS Core Hospitals (serving >6,000 HIV-positive people), HIV researchers, governmental agencies, and community staffs in Tokyo, Nagoya, Kanagawa, and Osaka. We sought to understand current HIV testing alternatives, reasons behind late diagnosis, and identified immediate strategies for scaling-up early HIV testing.

In Japan, community organizations are spearheading HIV testing initiatives by implementing online-to-oﬄine (O2O) models in collaboration with clinical laboratory. This approach reduced HIV testing uptake among MSM (1,127 DBS samples collected), with provisional positive rate of 2.4%[3]. In Nagoya, HIV testing during 2018 collaboration with clinical laboratory led to increased HIV testing uptake among MSM (1,127 DBS samples collected), with provisional positive rate of 2.4%[3]. In Nagoya, HIV testing during 2018 LGBT event has seen two-fold year-on-year increase in HIV testing (approx. 700 MSM).

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In Osaka, bimonthly, weekend-based HIV/STI testing program (engaging 30-40 MSM) offers low-cost HIV testing during late hours at collaborating private clinics. Japanese MSM actively use Internet for seeking sex partners, e.g. gay dating app 9 monsters has reportedly >300,000 active members[4]. While traditional outreach approaches at gay hotspots are widely prevalent, sexual health campaigns (e.g. Sailor Moon) to stem rapid rise of STI cases by government has had limited impact among MSM.

CONCLUSIONS

To reach the first 90, Japan needs diffusion of innovative technology to streamline its HIV service delivery and develop a culturally-sensitive communications strategy. To ensure seamless virtual to critical oﬄine HIV services transition, Japan should implement an integrated online-to-oﬄine (O2O) model offering real-time counseling and online bookings (QR codes) to ensure privacy and real-time monitoring features to help track/validate participants[5-6].

METHODS

Municipal healthcare centers remain key sites delivering free/anonymous HIV/STI testing, although their women/child health focus limits uptake among MSM. Primary reasons for late HIV diagnosis included challenges in reaching and engaging MSM in HIV cascades, structural barriers i.e. testing capacity, schedule/accessibility, lack of MSM-friendly services and regulatory issues with HIV self-testing.

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