



Peer prevention and HIV testing : The ANRS-COM'TEST project, France. Training AIDES's non-medical community actors (CA) to do rapid HIV testing and strengthen HIV prevention intervention with men who have sex with men (MSM)

Issues

For 25 years, AIDES, France's largest community-based HIV association, has been actively doing community level prevention. MSM most at risk expressed the need for more widely available and regular screening. AIDES' response was an experiment, incorporating HIV testing into prevention interventions targeting MSMs. It was necessary to show that CA were capable of conducting the screening process legally a medical prerogative in France.

Description

Sixty volunteers were interviewed and followed a 6 day specific and validating training course. Complementing basic training for all members of the association, it covered HIV and STI transmission (1 day), research protocol (1.5 days), motivational interviewing for pre and post-test counseling (2 days) and practice of rapid testing on capillary blood (1.5 days).

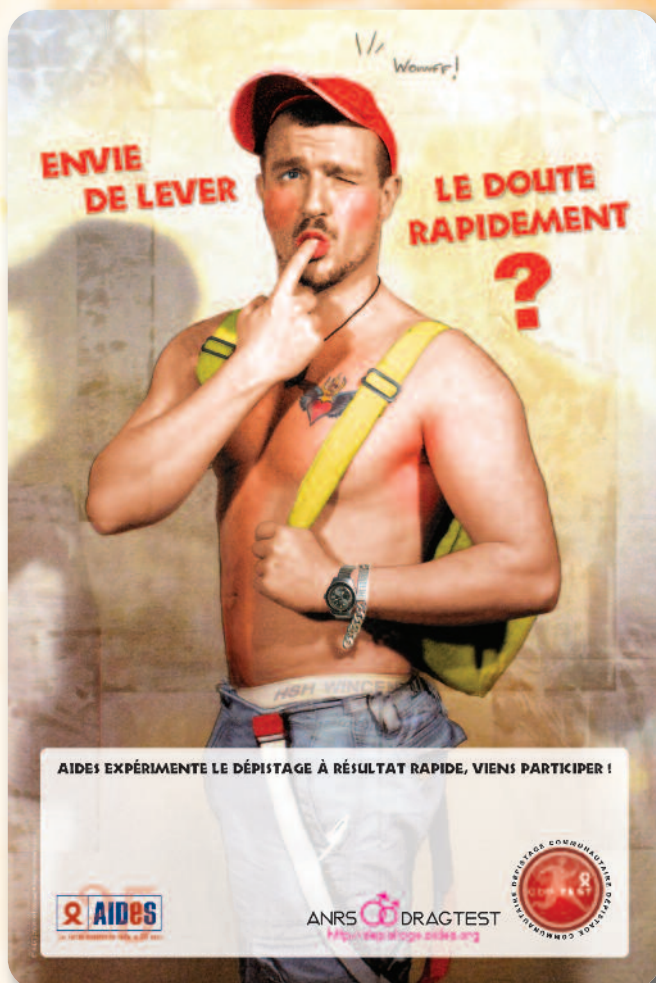
The training was evaluated via an interview with a trainer, a self-reporting questionnaire and indirectly by 'on-exit' satisfaction questionnaires filled out by the MSM

Lessons learned

Six CA (10%) could not or did not wish to participate in the action, following the training course; the others expressed high satisfaction of the skills acquired and contents of the training particularly in terms of its application in the field. The main apprehension before and during the training was announcing positive test results. This was not borne out by any particular difficulties for the ten positive (and confirmed) results.

342 people have been tested. 90% were very satisfied by the peer screening, 82% by the content of the counseling sessions and in particular risk taking and 84% by the way the results were announced.

All the CA are ready to integrate this new activity into their daily practice.



Next steps

The main results of the study and the acquired experience should contribute to recommendations to changing the law: allowing community screening to become an everyday activity on the condition of having followed the tested training course.



AIDES, a French NGO

Set up in 1984, AIDES is the largest HIV/AIDS and hepatitis community-based organisation in France, with centres in over 70 cities. We work with partner organisations in Europe, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

Our main goals:

- To mobilize people and communities affected by HIV and hepatitis
- To support people living with HIV and/or hepatitis, (social & professional integration, therapeutic education)
- To advocate for the rights of people living with HIV and/or hepatitis

For more information, visit our website on: www.aides.org

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