Evaluation of a Pilot Chain Peer Referral Approach for HIV Testing among Adolescents in Kisumu County, Kenya

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BACKGROUND
- ~18,000 adolescents become infected with HIV annually in Kenya
- Adolescents are among the least likely to access HIV testing

OBJECTIVE
Evaluate the feasibility of a chain peer referral approach to mobilize adolescents for HIV counseling and testing.

METHODS
- Index participants (IPs): Adolescents 15-19 seeking any health service
- IPs offered testing and given 3-5 referral coupons, with a cash incentive of Ksh.100 (~US $1) for each referral tested.
- Data analyzed using Chi-square, Fisher’s exact and Wilcoxon Rank-Sum tests
- Compared number of adolescents tested and HIV-positivity (yield) between the intervention (Sept. 2016-Mar. 2017) and baseline (Jan. 2016-Aug. 2016) periods

RESULTS
- Of the 1400 coupons issued to 368 IPs, 290 (20.9%) referrals were tested
- Number of adolescents tested was significantly higher during the intervention [median 202/month; IQR 150-354] compared to the baseline [median 154/month; IQR 117-179; p=0.049]
- Yield of HIV+ was lower during the intervention (0.5%) vs. the baseline (1.5%, p=0.009)
- None of referrals tested HIV positive

CONCLUSION
- The chain peer referral approach led to more adolescents being tested
- Males, adolescents in school, and those seeking testing were more likely to refer others for HIV testing, suggesting that prior exposure to comprehensive HIV education is important for peer referral
- This approach requires further evaluation, with efforts to specifically target girls who are at a higher risk for HIV acquisition and those with undiagnosed HIV infection

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