Effectiveness of Community-led Sex-Positive Campaign on HIV Testing for Young Men who have Sex with Men (YMSM) in Metro Manila, Philippines

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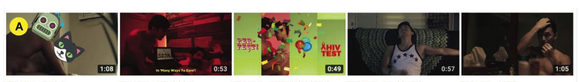
BACKGROUND

In a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines, HIV prevention campaigns use stigma and fear to educate the public about HIV. There is an absence of sex-positive HIV prevention efforts in the Philippines that use the internet and social media to engage YMSM.



The testXXX in 2015 has been a successful campaign in Thailand to encourage MSM to get tested for HIV. LoveYourself, a community-based LGBT organization, partnered with APCOM to test the effectiveness of this sex-positive HIV prevention model in the Philippines. After a series of focus group discussions, LoveYourself and APCOM adapted testBKK's simple, clear, and easy-to-remember slogan to encourage YMSM to get tested for HIV: “SUCK. F*#K. TEST. REPEAT”.

testMNL is a campaign that leverage on online platforms to drive sex-positive HIV prevention efforts; due to the concentration of HIV infections in Metro Manila, this campaign is focused on YMSM (18-24 years old) who regularly seek out male sexual partners online.

METHOD

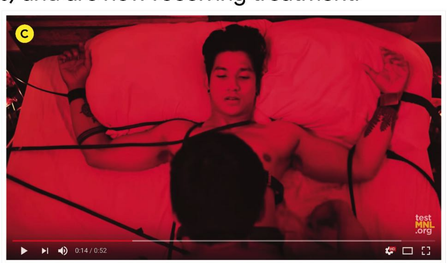
A website with an interactive map of MSM-friendly partner clinics, sexual health information, and videos promoting safer sex attitudes were created to provide information for those who want to learn more about their sexual health and know where to get tested for free.

Offline activation events promoting testMNL is always in partnership with bigger events (e.g. Pride March) to attract more YMSM.

Sponsored posts on social media containing the testMNL link and/or video were used to target YMSM in Metro Manila to lead them to the website. Here we present and analyze the HIV testing data by the partner clinics and website analytics.

RESULTS

The campaign from February to October 2017 reached 46,910 individuals to learn about HIV testing in Metro Manila via **www.testMNL.org**; partner clinics report a total of 18,369 individuals were tested for HIV (38.25% or 7,026 are YMSM), while 1,343 YMSM turned out positive (19.11%) and are now receiving treatment.



TestMNL - RED ROOM

On social media, testMNL created 79,934+ views on campaign videos on Facebook and YouTube, 7,642 Facebook likes, and 3,155 Twitter followers. Partner clinics also reported an average increase in HIV testing of 62.05% compared to previous months the year before. Meetings with community groups, clinical partners, private partners and YMSM also reported the effectiveness of the campaign in their engagements on the importance of sexual health promotion, creating a shift to a more sex-positive environment in the gay community in Metro Manila.

CONCLUSIONS

The campaign concludes the need for more community-led sex-positive campaigns that will educate YMSM about their sexual health and encourage them to get tested for HIV. Scale up of the program is needed to provide more opportunity to develop new campaign messages that address key barriers to HIV continuum of care.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of LoveYourself professional staff and volunteers, without their help this work would not have been possible.

FUNDING

This campaign is supported by APCOM through the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

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PHOTO DESCRIPTION

A. testMNL videos on YouTube (/testMNL)
B. testMNL offline activation at Boracay, Philippines
C. testMNL Red Room Youtube Video
D. testMNL & LoveYourself Pride March '17 Volunteers