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HIV SELF-TESTING AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS DURING THE WAR IN UKRAINE: SUSTAINED COVERAGE THROUGH NGO-LED COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMS, 2023–2025

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OBJECTIVES

People who inject drugs (PWID) remain one of the key populations at increased risk of HIV in Ukraine. HIV self-testing with assisted support is an integral component of NGO-led community-based HIV prevention programs, including outreach services, and contributes to expanding access to HIV testing among PWID. Since 2022, these programs have been implemented amid war, internal displacement, and migration, creating additional challenges to maintaining service continuity. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of the war on trends in PWID coverage with HIV self-testing provided as part of community-based HIV prevention programs in Ukraine during 2023–2025.

METHODS

A retrospective analysis of routine programmatic monitoring data from the national HIV prevention program for people who inject drugs (PWID), implemented by non-governmental organizations, was conducted. Data were obtained from the program monitoring information system. Planned and actual coverage of PWID with HIV self-testing, provided as a component of HIV prevention programs, was assessed for 2023–2025. The analysis included 24 regions of Ukraine where services were delivered, excluding temporarily occupied territories.

RESULTS

Despite the war, internal displacement, and population migration, HIV self-testing services for PWID were continuously delivered across all accessible regions of Ukraine. In 2023, 199,566 PWID received HIV self-testing, representing 94.7% of all PWID reached by HIV prevention services (210,747 individuals). In 2024, 186,690 PWID received HIV self-testing (93.0% of 200,709 reached), while in 2025, 192,445 PWID were provided with HIV self-testing (95.8% of 200,781 reached). Despite the challenging wartime context, annual HIV self-testing coverage remained stable at more than 186,000 PWID, demonstrating sustained access to and continuity of this essential component of community-based HIV prevention programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the challenges posed by the war, internal displacement and population migration, integrating HIV self-testing into community-based HIV prevention programmes implemented by non-governmental organizations in partnership with the government ensured continuous access to HIV testing for people who inject drugs (PWID). These findings demonstrate the resilience of this service delivery model and support its further scale-up to sustain progress toward national HIV response goals.