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HIV SELF-TESTING IN UKRAINE: SCALING DIFFERENTIATED TESTING MODELS AMONG KEY POPULATIONS (2025)

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OBJECTIVES

HIV self-testing (HIVST) is a core component of WHO-recommended differentiated HIV testing services aimed at expanding access among key and underserved populations. In Ukraine, HIVST has been implemented as an innovative approach to overcome geographic, social, and structural barriers to HIV testing, particularly in contexts with limited access to facility-based services. To assess the implementation of differentiated HIVST models in Ukraine and their contribution to expanding HIV testing coverage among key and vulnerable populations in 2025.

METHODS

A retrospective analysis of routine programmatic data was conducted. Unassisted HIVST kits were distributed through healthcare facilities, community-based organizations, secondary distribution mechanisms, and postal delivery. Assisted HIVST included counselling support during test use and linkage to confirmatory testing and HIV care in case of reactive results, in line with WHO recommendations on differentiated service delivery and linkage to care.

RESULTS

A total of 122,310 HIV self-test kits were distributed through unassisted delivery channels. Additionally, 408,700 individuals accessed assisted HIVST services. The proportion of reactive results was 1.4%, consistent with expected yields for population-based testing approaches and indicating effective identification of individuals with probable HIV infection and successful linkage to the HIV care cascade. The combination of assisted and unassisted models expanded testing coverage, improved confidentiality, reduced structural barriers, and increased access for individuals in remote and underserved communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Ukraine’s experience confirms alignment with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on implementing differentiated approaches to HIV testing. The scale-up of HIV self-testing (HIVST) through multichannel delivery models has substantially expanded access to HIV testing and strengthened the HIV service cascade. HIVST is an effective, scalable, and sustainable approach for increasing testing coverage among key populations and other underserved groups, particularly in the context of systemic challenges, while promoting early HIV diagnosis and timely linkage to prevention and treatment services.