

Integrating Family Planning and HIV Testing to Improve Women's Testing Uptake in Swaziland

Background

Ndwabangeni Nazarene Clinic, a facility serving a deeply rural area of Swaziland's Hhohho Region, had difficulty meeting the HIV testing needs of its women clients. Only 125 (17%) of the 697 family planning (FP) clients who visited the clinic from July 2014 to January 2015 received HIV testing services (HTS). Providers in the clinic realized that they were losing opportunities to reach a large number of women; and they began to question why they were unable to add HTS to FP visits. Clinical staff had "no clue" why testing uptake was low, because, as nurse Welile Mamba recalls, "We were referring all women coming into the facility for FP to our HIV testing and counseling department to test for HIV before leaving the facility."

Unfortunately, most never went for testing—for many reasons, clients said, including long waits for testing and lack of confidentiality during and after the testing.

Intervention

In October 2015, the AIDSFree Project introduced a quality improvement (QI) project at Ndwabangeni Nazarene Clinic, seeking to link HTS to FP, and aiming to incrementally increase the proportion of FP clients offered HTS, reaching 100 percent by the end of June 2016. Clinic staff identified the gaps in their system and the challenges they faced, including insufficient staff understanding the importance of routine HIV testing for FP clients; inconsistent updating of the HTS register; and late client arrival for FP visits, which did not leave time to also provide HTS services. The staff



Picture: Welile Mamba poses for a picture after receiving an award on behalf of his facility in the recent Regional Semi-Annual Review Meeting.

then developed solutions—offering HTS at every FP visit; adding an HTS register within the FP department; encouraging early arrival by clients; and testing FP patients within the FP department, rather than referring them to another department.

Outcome

After introducing the QI project, the facility achieved 100 percent HIV testing for the 65 eligible FP clients, as per the June 2016 target; and this trend has continued. Based on the success of the FP/HTS integration, the clinic plans to implement QI projects in other departments, such as ante-natal care.

"This got us good results and we are grateful to AIDSFree and PEPFAR for introducing us to [this approach]," Mamba said.

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