

## High uptake of mobile VCT services during MEMA kwa Vijana Trial Further Survey in Tanzania

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**Background:** The MEMA kwa Vijana Trial Further Survey (MkV1FS), 2007-2008, is evaluating the long-term impact of the 'MEMA kwa Vijana' adolescent sexual health intervention within a community randomised trial. During this survey, ~14,500 young people 17-25y in 20 rural communities of Mwanza Region will be offered HIV voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). In the 2001-02 phase of the trial only 0.28% of participants, aged 17-20y, opted to know their HIV result.

**Methods:** Study counsellors test a fingerprick blood specimen using two rapid HIV tests in front of the participant. While awaiting the result (15 minutes) the counsellor discusses HIV, possible test results and an individual risk minimisation strategy. Those who test positive are referred to a government health facility for CD4 testing and assessment for HAART.

**Results:** By December 2007, 8302 young people had been interviewed in 12 of the 20 communities. 6014 (72%) of those offered VCT services accepted testing. Overall HIV prevalence based on VCT was 2.1%. On univariate analysis, factors associated with VCT acceptance include male sex, age 24 years, travel in the past year, and participation in early phase of MkV trial. Acceptance was lower among participants who had attended secondary school or higher. There was no association between VCT acceptance and reported high risk sexual behaviour. Anecdotal reports to counsellors suggest that the study's mobile services were preferred to local VCT services, partly because they were perceived as more confidential.

**Conclusions:** Despite being young, a high proportion of MkV1FS participants want to know their HIV status. Local availability of ART and a recent HIV testing promotion campaign led by the Tanzanian President, may have increased demand for the VCT services. HIV testing and counselling is an important service for participants in HIV prevention trials and this study demonstrated that it is feasible and acceptable in a young cohort.

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