

Tailored interventions for a Community Based HIV testing setting to ensure high quality services in six HIV burdened sub-districts in South Africa

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BACKGROUND

To ensure that HIV testing quality standards are met within community-based programs, a quality assurance approach that is different from approaches employed within facilities needed to be developed and incorporated in the facility approach. This paper discusses how this approach was developed and implemented focussing on the cold chain maintenance and conducive environment for testing.

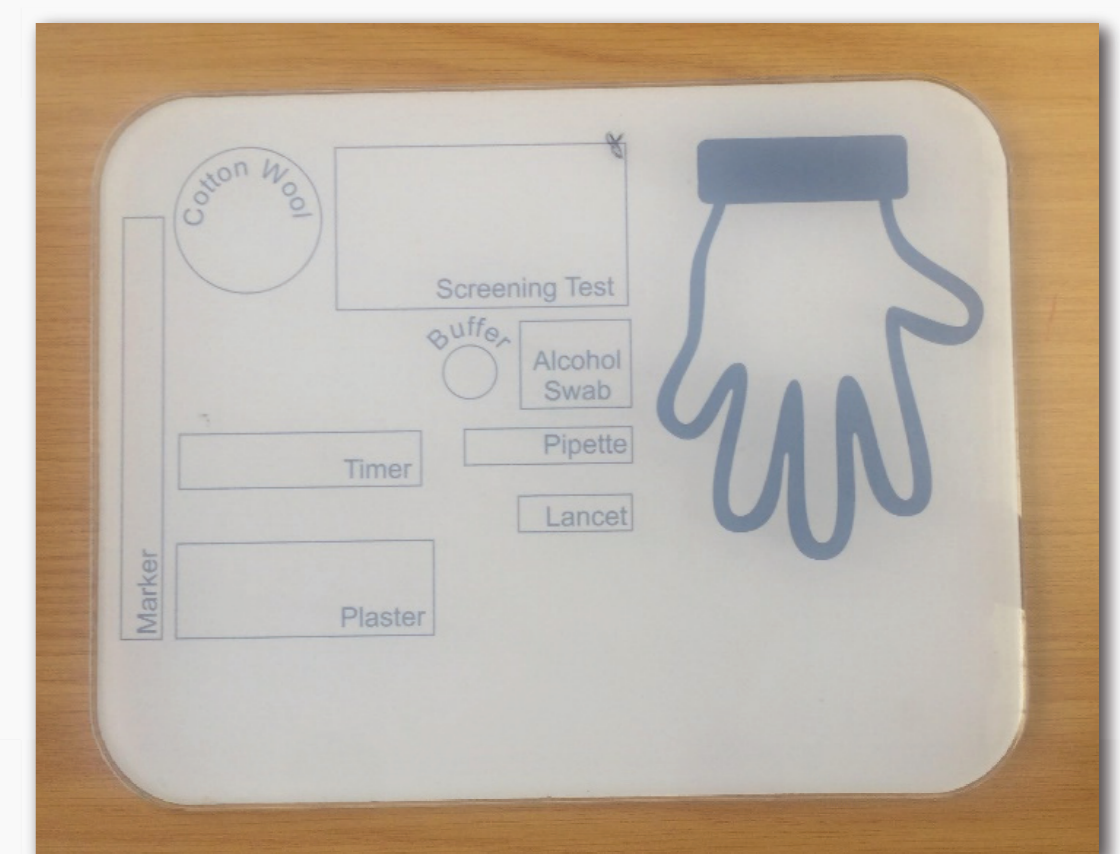
METHODS

To ensure a professional testing set up, counsellors are provided with a backpack that holds firm the testing equipment against possible breakages or disturbances. To create a dedicated testing space the bag comes with a testing table and a testing board on which the testing equipment can be set up. Counsellors carry hand sanitizers and surface cleaners for use where there is no access to running water and soap for cleaning purposes. Counsellors and the equipment are protected against bad weather conditions by using an umbrella, sun hat and rain jacket. The team leader uses a cooler box with icepacks to keep test kits at recommended temperatures. The cooler boxes are temperature-monitored with thermometers and the temperatures are recorded at least three times a day. Counsellors keep maximal four test kits in the cooling department of the testing bag, which is temperature controlled via two icepacks. In case icepacks melt during the day the counsellor exchanges the icepacks for frozen ones.



RESULTS

Almost 176,344 clients have been tested through this method in 6 subdistricts in Nkangala in the period October 2016 – February 2019. Two invalids and zero discordant test results have been reported indicating that the multi-disciplinary interventions that have been implemented serve as a high-quality strategy to ensure the reliability of the test kits.



CONCLUSION

There is an ongoing need to monitor and evaluate the described strategy to improve it further. Suggestions for improvement include thermometers and temperature recording sheets in the counsellor's testing bag as well.

Keywords: Assurance, Multi-Disciplinary, HIV Testing, Community Based, Cold Chain, Equipment