Performance evaluation between home-based caregiver-assisted oral HIV screening of children and facility-based confirmatory testing using the national algorithm in Uganda

Authors: Nazarius Mbionga Tumwesigye1, Carl Stecker2, Claire Biribawa1, Aggrey Mukosod, Cissie Namanda3, MakSPH FASTER Study Team4, Daniel Oliver5, Christina Mwangi3, David Mabirizi4, Anna Colletar Awor5, Esther Nazziwa5, Francis Oleiero5, Mary Grace Alwano5, Martina Hatt, Jessica Gross5, KaelAnne Parris5, Geoffrey Taasi6, Bharat Parekh5

Background
Uganda has an estimated 26,727 children living with HIV (CLHIV) not on treatment. Children depend on caregivers for testing who face logistical and societal barriers. Caregiver-assisted oral HIV self-testing (HIVST) offers convenient and timely opportunity to expand pediatric testing options.

Aim
To identify factors associated with discrepant results between reactive at-home caregiver-assisted oral HIVST and subsequent facility-based HIV-positive confirmatory testing.

Methods
- Investigation focused on caregiver-assisted HIVST for children 18 months-14 years.
- OraQuick Advance® Rapid HIV-1/2 Antibody screening used.
- Counselors received pre-study and refresher trainings to correctly use HIVST screening and report results.
- Children with reactive HIVST results received blood-based confirmatory testing based on the national testing algorithm.
- Firth’s logistic regression used to explore factors associated with the discrepant results.
- Factors assessed included timing of counselor trainings/refresher and background characteristics of HIVST reactive cases.

Results
- 2,318 index parents/caregivers for 4,865 children recruited.
- 4,766 screened with caregiver-assisted HIVST.
- 98 (2.1%) had reactive results and 4 (0.1%) children had invalid results.
- All 98 children (100.0%) received confirmatory testing:
  - 32 (32.7%) confirmed HIV-positive
  - 66 (67.3%) confirmed HIV-negative
  - (HIV prevalence of 0.67%)
- Assuming all nonreactive HIVST results (n=4,664) were true negatives:
  - HIVST specificity, 98.6%
  - Positive predictive value, 32.7%
- Discrepant reactive HIVST and HIV-negative confirmatory results were associated with a period between full site activation and the second refresher training [OR=2.75, 95% CI: 2.75 (1.10-6.87)].
- Discrepant reactive HIVST and HIV-negative confirmatory results did not vary by rural/urban area.

Conclusion
Caregiver-assisted HIVST is an effective pediatric screening HIV tool. The lower positive predictive value and number of false-positive results were not unexpected in this low prevalence population.

Recommendation
Intensive counselor training on how to instruct caregivers to correctly administer HIVST and read results are critical to the programmatic expansion of reliable caregiver-assisted pediatric oral HIVST.

Contact:
Nazarius Mbionga Tumwesigye
+256782447771
nasi@musph.ac.ug

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Affiliations:
1] Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH), Kampala, Uganda; 2] Catholic Relief Services, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; 3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kampala, Uganda; 4] Catholic Relief Services, Kampala, Uganda; 5] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA; 6] HIV Testing Services, Ministry of Health, Kampala, Uganda

Time and distribution of discrepancy test results by week

Cumm. No of Cases

Week

Freq-Discrepant  Cumm. Discrepant  Cumm Reactive HIVST

Legend:
- 1st Refresher training for counselors - 5 May 2021
- 2nd Refresher training for counselors - 8 June 2021

Legend:
- Freq-Discrepant
- Cumm. Discrepant
- Cumm Reactive HIVST