



Difficult to reach, fragile key populations at high risk: the Bergamo Leaves No One Behind Project

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Introduction

- The Bergamo Fast-Track City Network started its work on education, information and testing on STIs and HIV proposing tests in public events and in structured checkpoint.
- It was soon clear that fragile population might have difficulties in accessing the network. Two weeks a year the test was already proposed in places frequented by fragile populations.
- The project purpose is give information about STIs in 22 different languages with the help of a booklet; the goal is to incentivize the test and supporting the linkage to care and the retention in care of particularly fragile PLWH.

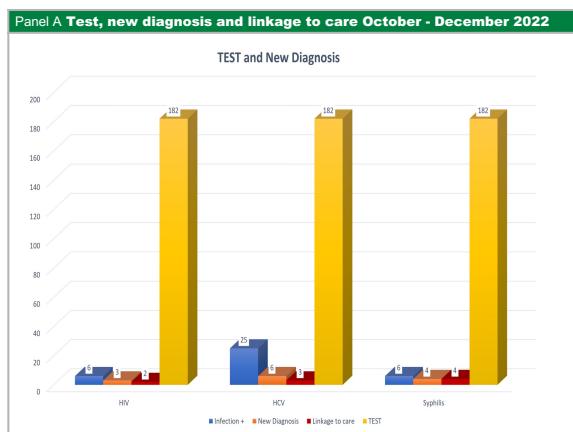
Methods

- Six social services dealing with key populations such as sex-workers, IVDU, Migrants, Homeless were involved in the project.
- In the first period, operators and volunteers carried out training on the typology, diffusion and therapy of STIs..
- Information about and free tests for STIs and HIV made available for key populations that do not interact with structured services, thanks to the activities of the six social entities.
- A structured program has been set up to bring HIV, HCV and Shyphilis tests in places where these key populations usually gather.
- The test is coped with Cobatest questionnaire, which collects personal and behavioral data, previous infections and awareness about STIs and social stigma.
- In the case of a positive test or of a known infection, operators of the project offer help to start the therapeutic process and to favor retention in care.



Results

- The test is offered in 7 different locations for an average of 23 days a month.
- Since October 2022 to December 2022 we met 192 people, 182 of whom seeking for testing and 10 asking us treatment support.
- Out of the 182 people tested, 6 turned out positive for HIV, 25 for HCV and 6 for Syphilis [Panel A].
- Among the 10 people asking support, 5 turned to us asking to be reconnected to treatment and 5 referred difficulties in accessing hospital facilities.



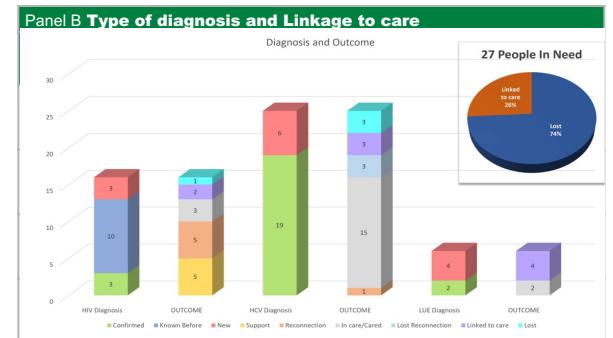
Results of 2

New Diagnosis and fast support

- The positive tests also include people who, aware of their health situation, still wanted to undergo the tests.
- All the 10 people asking support for the treatment are they had an immediate need for therapy either because they are foreigners who have just arrived in Italy or because they are in serious socio-economic difficulties.

HIV and STIs test interpretation

- As a matter of fact, only 3 HIV positivities were new diagnoses, 2 of new diagnosis were linked to care.
- Six out of the 25 hepatitis C were new diagnosis, three of which were linked to treatment. Among the remaining 19, 15 people were already cured, 4 were diagnosed but never got treated, but only 1 of them accepted to be treated.
- Finally, out of the 6 positivity to syphilis, the new diagnosis were 4 and all have been successfully linked to care [Panel B].



Results of 3

Informations for everyone

- Another important result is the spread of informations about tests, HIV and STIs.
- With the help of translators and cultural mediators we produced a booklet with base information about HIV, transmissions, protection from virus and U=U.
- The Booklet contains translations in 10 different languages and a link to videos that give same informations in 12 less used or oral only languages.

Conclusions

- Our data indicate a positive trend for the Bergamo Leaves No One Behind Project.
- Despite the difficulties in reaching the most fragile populations, we encountered 192 people in the first months of the project. Twenty-seven needed support to access hospital facilities to be treated.
- 20 people effectively started therapy in hospital after testing positive or after turning to us for support (10). A surprising fact is that a few PLWH found in the project a way to re-engage with treatment or to decide to start it.
- The 7 persons who didn't show up for appointments or who expressed the desire not to treat their infection, most had previous untreated diagnosis. Hooking up to the care these people will be a further objective in the upcoming months.

