

Optimizing Targeted Testing Approaches for High-risk Groups: Examining the Effectiveness of the Men's Wellness Clinic Model in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe, 2023-2024

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BACKGROUND

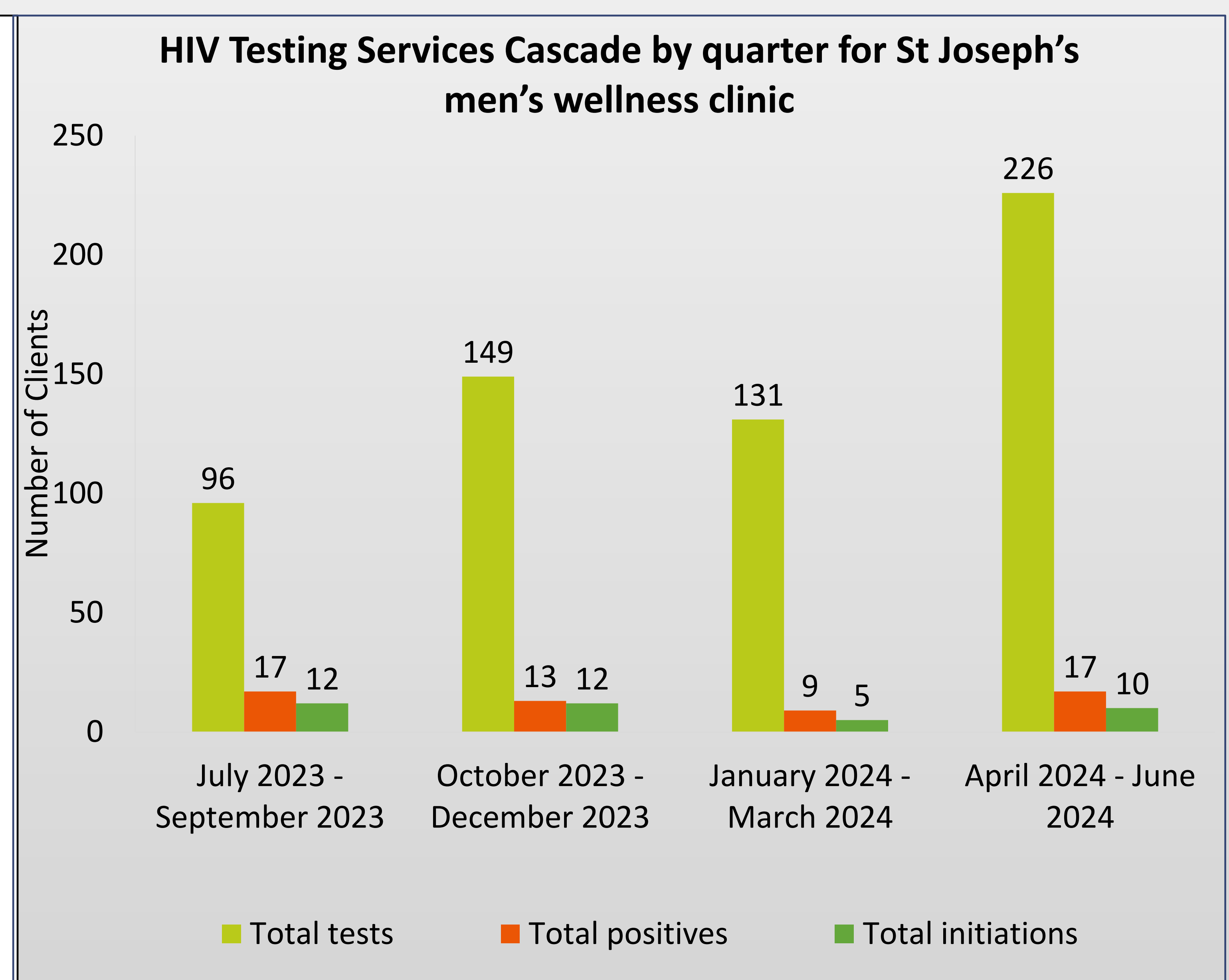
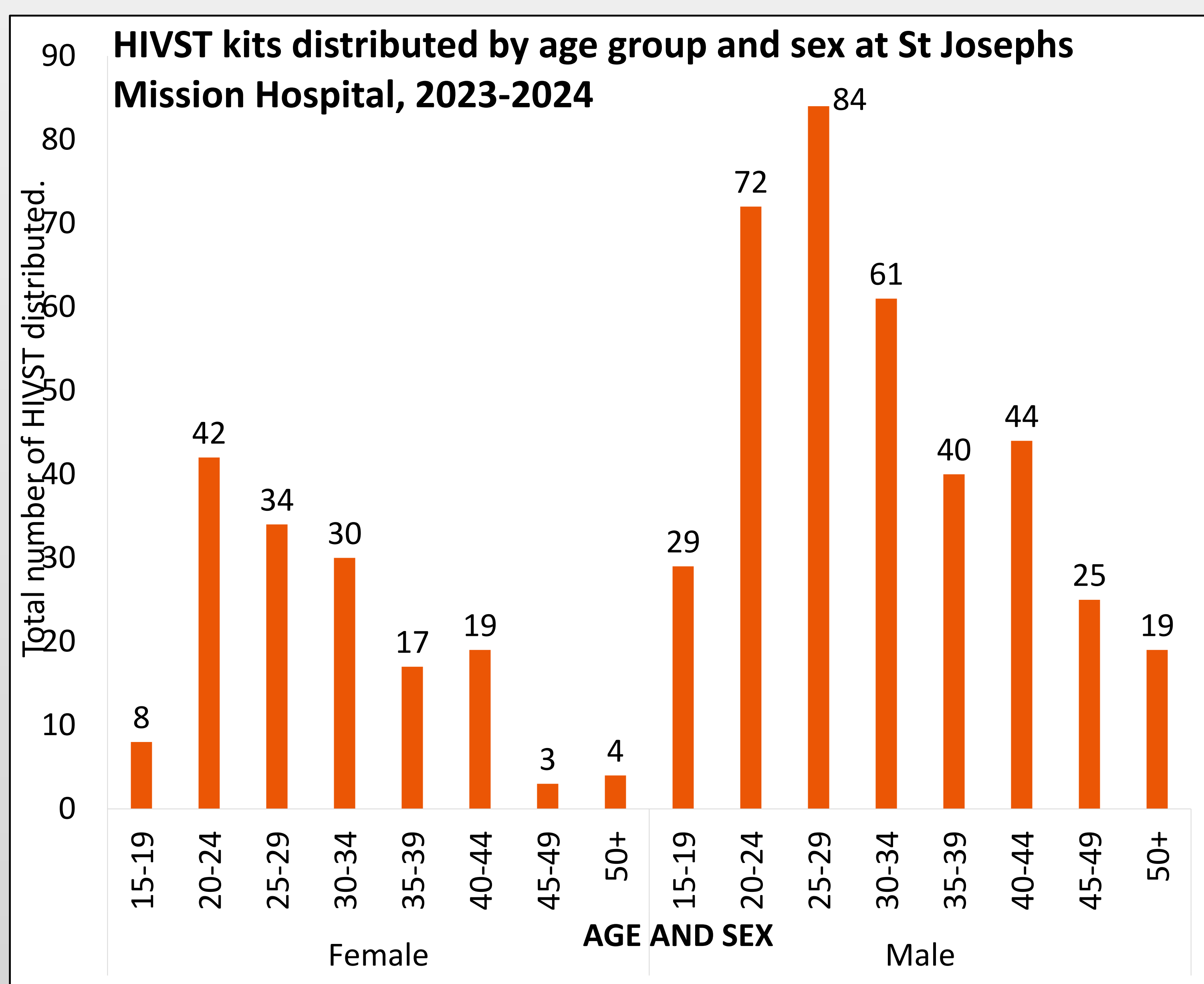
Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals (ZACH) piloted a Men's Wellness Clinic model to combat HIV access barriers, including stigma, discrimination, by providing non-communicable disease (NCDs) screening alongside HIV related services. The model targets busy formal workers, especially men that have challenges accessing conventional health services. The clinic provided services during non-working hours including weekends. HIV services comprised of distributing HIV self-testing (HIVST) kits, educating vulnerable men about the importance of HIV status knowledge, and linkages to prevention and treatment services as appropriate.

METHOD

St Joseph's Mission Clinic Men's Wellness Clinic model was set up in Mashonaland East Province. The clinic catchment area strategically included the low-density suburbs in the northeastern parts of Harare City where formally employed men, their domestic workers and other blue-collar employees have limited time to visit clinics for HIV services during the working hours. Providing HIV services integrated with screening for non-communicable diseases during the non-working hours, such as weekends, attracted men to visit facilities seeking provision of confidential HIV services. Using descriptive statistics, we analyzed routine program data reported through the ZACH App summarized in Power BI for the period 2023-2024.

RESULTS

There was a 235% rise in the number of males who accessed rapid HIV testing, from 96 in COP22 Quarter 4 (July to September 2023) to 226 in COP23 Quarter 3 (April to June 2024). From June to August 2023, St Joseph's distributed 531 self-test kits and 70% (374/531) were distributed to men mainly through the wellness clinic model. The analysis also revealed that 80% of the HIVST kits distributed to males were utilized by males aged 20–44 years. From October 2023 to September 2024, 192 of 2480 men who attended the wellness clinic had elevated blood pressure.



CONCLUSION

The St Joseph's men's wellness model has expanded HIV testing services, particularly for males, due to its convenience, privacy and easy access for men who are usually busy during the working hours. However, the model needs to be expanded to reach more vulnerable and key populations with HIV testing and linkage to treatment and prevention services. The model also needs to have a strong community psycho-social support system to improve rapid ART initiation for men living with HIV. Data analysis is also recommended to understand better the non-communicable diseases management cascade for men that are receiving HIV services through the men's wellness model.

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