

Using Social Media with Latino MSM for HIV Testing & Linkage

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There are about 4,620 undiagnosed Latinos living in Los Angeles County. A reason for this large number is because among Latinos there is a pattern of testing late for HIV. Identifying innovative ways of engaging Latino MSM in HIV testing, medical care and prevention services has the potential to decrease HIV transmission and improve health outcomes among this population.

We propose to develop a culturally-tailored intervention to increase HIV testing and linkage to HIV medical care and prevention services among Latino MSM unaware of their HIV status. This will consist of three interconnected and complementary components: 1) social media, 2) conditional cash transfers and 3) linkage coordination to HIV medical care and/or prevention services. Social networking sites (SNS) with geo-based location services will be used to recruit high-risk Latino MSM. We hypothesize that our program will result in identifying higher rates of HIV-positive Latino MSM, higher rates of newly-identified HIV-positive Latino MSM accessing HIV medical care, and higher rates of HIV-positive and high-risk HIV-negative Latino MSM accessing HIV prevention services compared to the local standard of care.

Our project with high-risk Latino MSM unaware of their HIV status has the following aims for the formative phase: 1) to determine the social, cultural and structural barriers to accessing HIV testing, treatment and prevention services among Latino MSM; 2) to develop an innovative and culturally competent intervention to identify, test and link Latino MSM to HIV prevention and care services; 3) to engage with selected social network sites in order to develop formal agreements that will allow our recruitment to take place through their sites; and 4) to assess the acceptability and feasibility of implementing the proposed intervention with Latino MSM. The specific aims for the implementation phase are 1) to evaluate if a culturally-tailored social media program results in identifying a higher rate of HIV-positive Latino MSM compared to the local standard of care; 2) to evaluate if our proposed program results in a higher rate of newly-identified HIV-positive Latino MSM accessing HIV medical care compared to the local standard of care; and 3) to evaluate if our program results in a higher rate of Latino MSM accessing HIV prevention services compared to the local standard of care.

We will conduct eight focus groups with Latino MSM to determine how each program component (social media, conditional cash transfers and linkage coordination) should be incorporated into the proposed intervention. In the implementation phase, we propose to test 1,000 Latino MSM for HIV and compare our intervention to the local standard of care. Our local standards of care will consist of Bienestar's own HIV testing program and public health data obtained from all Los Angeles County-funded HIV testing programs.

We expect that our program will result in identifying higher rates of HIV-positive Latino MSM, newly-identified HIV-positive Latino MSM accessing HIV medical care, and HIV-positive and high-risk HIV-negative Latino MSM accessing HIV prevention services compared to the local standard of care. The proposed research is attentive to the needs of California because the largest number of new HIV/AIDS cases is among Latinos, and Latinos are more likely than all other races/ethnicities to be diagnosed with AIDS at the time of or within one year of their initial HIV diagnosis.