



Guidelines for Administering Rapid Test

These guidelines are intended to outline some important points that we have to emphasize during counseling provided in conjunction with rapid tests.

Preparing clients for the rapid test

This part is to provide the client with information before administering the rapid test so that he will be more informed of the meaning, procedure and implications of the test. He can be then to make an informed choice about whether he wants to go through with the procedure.

- Explain to clients what rapid HIV tests are
 - Same day test result
 - Conclusive if negative
 - Preliminary if positive
 - Confirmatory test required if positive

- Explain to clients how rapid tests are different from standard HIV tests which involve blood or urine samples being sent to a lab for testing.
 - The main difference concerns positive results only. A positive result from a rapid test is only a preliminary result, while a positive result from the standard tests is confirmatory.
 - Confirmatory positive results, such as those received from standard lab-based tests, have to go through a 2-stage testing process: screening and confirmation.
 - A **Screening test** is maximally sensitive so that it can pick up the presence of HIV antibodies or even something similar. Hence, a client with a negative screening test result can be told he is not infected. It is highly unlikely that the test would fail to detect the antibodies if they were present in the blood.
 - It is because the screening test is so sensitive that it occasionally reacts positively to things in the blood which are not HIV antibodies. This is called a false positive.
 - Therefore, if the screening process produces a positive result, the sample has to go through **confirmatory test** to check that the result is a true positive

and not a false one. Confirmatory tests are usually lab based and use a different method of testing. They are less likely to produce false positives.

- Rapid tests are only screening tests while standard tests combine screening and confirmation (if the result shows positive shows during the screening test). Note: HIV blood tests with some private doctors or laboratories are only screening tests; i.e. some labs do not do confirmatory tests on samples screened positive. For our urine test, the sample will go through two tests (screening and confirmation) before clients are told they are HIV positive.
- Inform clients what the procedure will be if the result shows positive in the rapid test
 - The sample of urine will be sent to the laboratory for a confirmatory test
 - The result will come back in a few days. We cannot specify the exact length of the waiting period. We can tell the client that we will contact the laboratory of the Department of Health, and request a more prompt test for the sample.
 - Ask the client to leave us with his contact number so we can update him about the progress. If the client refuses to leave us his contact number agree with him to call us the next day during office hours.
 - Inform the client that we will not give out the confirmatory result over the phone; he has to come back in person to collect it.
 - If the person wants a blood test, we can also refer him to the AIDS Unit, Yaumatei.
- Explore with the client how he feels about the possibility of a short but indefinite wait while a positive screening result is sent to the lab for confirmation. For example you could discuss:
 - Available support mechanisms; does he have he have anyone to talk to?
 - Experiences of dealing with uncertainty.
 - How he feels about the likelihood of him testing positive and how this compares with what he has told you about his behavioral risk.
 - What he thinks he would do during the waiting period.
- Summarize for the client the benefits and disadvantages of taking rapid tests, and give the client a space to make the final choice about whether to proceed (*the point is mostly overlooked by clients, but we have the obligation to point it out to them before they take the test*)
 - Typically clients prefer to know the result sooner rather than later, hence the

time factor rather than accuracy issues inform their decision to proceed with the test.

- However, we also need to remind the client, especially those with reported high- risk behaviors, that a positive result without the benefit of a same-day confirmatory test can be an emotional challenge. We should assess with the client if he is emotionally ready for it.

- Explain to the client why we also have to take a urine sample (for MSM community) while the rapid test is being administered.
 - The rapid testing service is being piloted in conjunction with our standard urine test. We want to assess how the community feels about it. We know that it has been tried in other country contexts and has been received very well by the community.
 - We are also assessing the accuracy of the test in the field. We compare the standard urine test which we have been using for many years, with the rapid test to see if there is any difference in reliability.
 - The information we collect on client response and test reliability will be used to decide if we continue the service on a long term basis.

- Explain to the client the procedure of giving the result of the urine test
 - If the result of the rapid test is negative, the person has to call in 10 working days with all three codes to get the confirmatory result. The person is strongly encouraged to take this step.
 - If the result of the rapid test is positive, the person has to come back in person for the confirmatory result.

After the result is given

Negative result:

- Tell all clients whose rapid test result is negative that they are not infected unless they have had a recent (within 3 months) known or possible exposure to HIV. Retesting should be recommended for these clients who have had unprotected sex or shared a needle within the last 3 months.

Positive result:

- Follow the Guidelines prepared by Loretta for handling cases testing HIV positive from our VCT services
- Some additional points to add:

- Since the client's urine sample will be sent for a confirmatory test, be sure to contact with the client how we can keep him informed of the progress.
- Encourage (do not force/insist) the client to leave his telephone number for further contact
- Support for the client:
 - ◆ Leave a contact number of our staff for any further enquiries from the client (if the staff administering the VCT service with the client feels ready to receive any enquires after the result is given out, he can keep 82033 551 diverted to his mobile. If not, please inform the client that he may contact Chung who will be informed of the case afterwards)

Note: We have yet to discuss the details of how we set boundaries for handling follow-up calls after testing. For the time being, I suggest keeping the service as accessible as possible since we and the community are accumulating experiences in using rapid tests.

Support to the staff

- It is also a very stressful process for workers who administer the rapid test, especially since the test is quite new to us. Ensuring enough support for the staff is a key issue. Staff who have the experience of giving out a positive rapid test result are encouraged to do the following:
 - Call your supervisor, or co-worker, and inform them of the situation.
 - Discuss not only what happened but how you felt about it. You can do this in a post-session phone call to a colleague and/or in a meeting with the same colleague the following day.
 - Do not hesitate to refer the client to your supervisor or co-worker to handle any follow up calls if you do not feel ready for the time being (make sure you have informed the client about the referral, and told him you are going to report what you have discussed with him to your supervisor or co-worker)

Follow up with the sample sent to the lab

- Arrange to send the sample to the laboratory the day after
- If practicable, send the sample to the lab in the morning (since I have been told that samples will be processed in afternoon)
- Contact Dr. Lim for a more prompt test on the sample. Leave her your contact information, and she will inform you once the result comes up.
- Call the client, and let him know that the sample has been sent to the lab. He

will be kept informed of the progress.

- After you have been informed that the result is ready, please arrange to pick up the report.
- Contact the client, and make an appointment with him to give the result