

EVALUATING THE FEASIBILITY OF POINT-OF-CARE TESTING IN MANITOBA

Research into Point-of-Care HIV testing (POCT) demonstrates that it is an appropriate and feasible model for increasing HIV testing, thereby facilitating earlier diagnosis, linkage to care and reducing the possibility of transmission. It has also proven to be helpful for hard-to-reach populations.

Evaluation Objectives

- **To determine whether POCT is an acceptable alternative to standard testing**
- **To learn about the factors that determine choice for POCT**
- **To determine clients' and service providers' level of satisfaction with POCT**

Methods

In order to assess the objectives a number of methods were used. Among these were a documentation review of the number of HIV tests and data from the client demographic forms completed during testing. In addition, a Client Satisfaction Survey was used to assess client's experiences. Finally, focus groups with Nine Circles' nurses were conducted to assess items such as service provider and perceived client satisfaction with POCT.

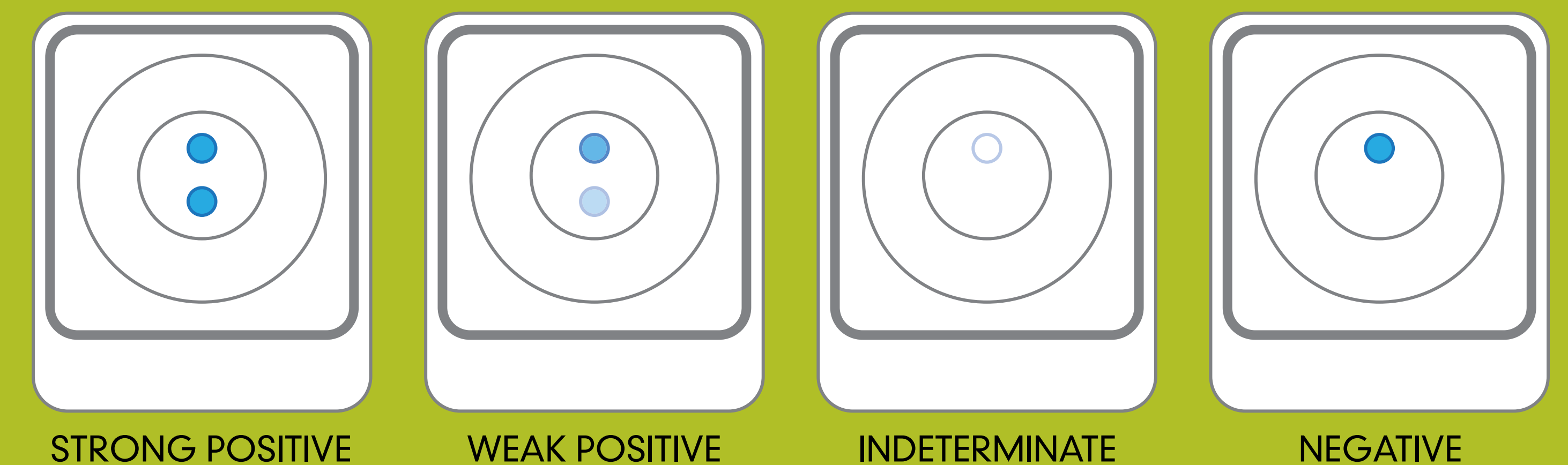
Key Findings

- There was high satisfaction with the POCT testing process among all respondents. Of those who completed a satisfaction survey, all using POCT would do use this method of testing again. Most also believed the results to be accurate.
- Clients were just as likely, or more likely, to utilize a POCT.
- Overall, those in Winnipeg's inner city, those who were seeking a rapid HIV test, those with a new partner, and those under the category of Men Having Sex with Men (MSM) employed the POCT option more often than standard HIV testing.
- Nurses expressed dissatisfaction around the mechanics and paperwork associated with administering the test.
- Nurses found somewhat more difficult to deliver POCT reactive results due to the lack to time to prepare themselves.

Conclusions

At-risk and marginalized groups testing needs are being further met with the availability of POCT, such as inner city clients and the especially high-risk group of MSM. It may also be valuable to individuals in rural and northern communities where access to HIV testing is limited.

The high accuracy and reliability of POCT has been demonstrated, as POCT tests have shown to be accurate, and we can presume that parallel testing is no longer necessary.



A total of 766 HIV tests were done during the sample timeframe and 438 (57%) of the total tests were POCT. Five (5) reactive tests were identified by POCT and the remaining were identified as non-reactive. All but one of the results of the POCT tests were confirmed as accurate by the Cadham Provincial Laboratory. This 1 non-reactive POCT was not confirmed by a parallel test, because there was insufficient blood to conduct the standard test. There were no POCT tests with indeterminate results.

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