RE-LINKAGE: THE STICKING POINT IN HIV PREVENTION

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Why We Did this Study

• The Merck Foundation funded Houston, for a three-year initiative to re-connect HIV infected people back to care.

• In 2012, when the project began, there were ~26 Service Linkage Workers (SLW) linking newly identified HIV positive clients to medical care.

• No SLWs were solely responsible for re-linking people to care.
Why We Did this Study

• Individuals who are out of care are at high risk for disease and death.

• Individuals who have been in care and have left care are estimated to cause *61.3%* of HIV transmissions\(^1\)

• If we could find those out of care and re-link them to care, we would make a major step toward controlling HIV.

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What We Did

- HIV Medical Provider Referrals (654 cases)
  - Out-of-care patients referred from providers
- Surveillance Referrals (200 cases)
  - HIV+ residents that previously were in care but no CD4/VL lab in last 6 months
- HIV+ that have a new STD (63 cases)
  - Health department staff have contact with HIV+ with new chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis cases
- Referrals form other areas (11 cases)
What We Did

• Prior to assignment to SLW, nine different databases were searched for:
  • Evidence of care
  • Locating information
  • Incarceration and vital status
• SLW attempted to locate client, mitigate barriers to care, and link client to medical and supportive services
• Accompanied client to medical appointments until care was established.
What We Found

• Investigated a total of 928 cases from June 2013- March 2015
  • 595 (64.1%) referrals were closed by searching in databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome *</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already in care</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved out of the area</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In jail or prison</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned for Service Linkage</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data as of 4/29/15
What We Found

928 referrals
333 assigned to SLWs
193 located
157 eligible
84 not in care
29 re-linked

595 admin closed
140 unable to locate
11 OOJ
8 deceased
6 incarcerated
5 HIV-negative
5 deported / ICE
1 incoherent
73 already in care
28 passive refusal
19 refusal
2 got in care on own
6 CASES OPEN

Re-linking 35% of those located, eligible, and out of care

Data as of 4/29/15
What Our Results Mean and Why this Matters

• More people are in care than we thought. No lab (CD4/VL) ≠ definitively out of care
  • Migration: Other jurisdictions have also shown that 27-72% of those presumed to be out of care have migrated or are dead

• Re-linkage is resource-intensive.

• Clients report the care system is complex.
  • Re-linkage clients have already experienced complexity and intensity.

• Collaboration is needed between providers and health departments.
  • Potential intervention at point of missing scheduled visits (prior to complete drop out).
Acknowledgments

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  • St. Hope Foundation
• Texas Department of State Health Services
• Houston Area Ryan White Planning Council
• Houston HIV Prevention Community Planning Group