



# Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Peer-Led HIV Self-Testing Intervention for Men Who Have Sex with Men in Mombasa, Kenya

James Omondi<sup>1,2</sup>, Fatuma Hassan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Internal Medicine, University of Nairobi

<sup>3</sup> University of Nairobi

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**Correspondence:** [jomondi@outlook.com](mailto:jomondi@outlook.com)

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## Author notes

*James Omondi is affiliated with African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

*Fatuma Hassan is affiliated with University of Nairobi and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

## Abstract

Men who have sex with men (MSM) in Kenya face a disproportionately high burden of HIV. Stigma and discrimination present significant barriers to conventional facility-based testing. HIV self-testing (HIVST) is a potential strategy to increase coverage, but requires effective distribution models for this key population. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a peer-led HIVST distribution model in increasing HIV testing uptake and frequency among MSM in Mombasa, Kenya. A quasi-experimental intervention study was conducted. A total of 350 MSM were enrolled and assigned to either an intervention arm or a control arm. The intervention arm received HIVST kits and support from trained MSM peers. The control arm received standard-of-care testing referrals. Data were collected via structured questionnaires at baseline and at a six-month follow-up to assess testing outcomes and experiences. The peer-led intervention significantly increased recent HIV testing uptake. At follow-up, 92% of participants in the intervention arm reported testing for HIV in the past three months, compared to 58% in the control arm. Qualitative feedback indicated that peer support helped to overcome testing anxieties. A peer-led HIVST distribution model was effective in increasing HIV testing uptake and frequency among MSM in Mombasa. This demonstrates its potential to improve testing accessibility for this marginalised group. HIV prevention programmes should consider integrating peer-led HIVST distribution into existing services for MSM. Further research is needed to assess the model's cost-effectiveness and its impact on linkage to confirmatory testing and care. HIV self-testing, men who have sex with men, peer-led intervention, Kenya, key populations, HIV testing This study provides evidence on the implementation of a community-based HIVST model for MSM in a Kenyan setting, demonstrating the effectiveness of a peer-led distribution approach.

**Keywords:** *HIV self-testing, men who have sex with men, peer-led intervention, Sub-Saharan Africa, implementation science, key populations, randomised controlled trial*

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