

ATN 139: Get Connected Summary of Study Results

Full Title

Get Connected: Linking YMSM to adequate care through a multi-level tailored webapp intervention (ATN 139)

Study Description

Get Connected is a brief application accessed using a browser (WebApp) that motivates young men to get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and to use Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Participants were randomly placed in one of two conditions. The first condition, included the full version of Get Connected, which included content tailored to users' demographic characteristics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, relationship status), HIV/STI prevention behaviors (e.g., HIV/STI testing history) and sociocultural context (e.g., homelessness, incarceration). The second condition, called the control, only included the Get Connected testing locator (TLO).

The Get Connected trial took place in Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Houston. We recruited 285 participants across these three cities. During the screening process, participants were determined eligible for the study if they had to (1) identify as cisgender men; (2) be 15-24 years of age; (3) reside in one of the three cities; (4) self-report as HIV-negative or has never tested for HIV; (5) have access to the internet; and (6) report engaging in condomless sex in the prior 6 months.

Participants completed surveys at the beginning of the study (baseline), and 30-days, 3-, 6-, 9- and 12-months after enrolling in the study. The point of the study was to find out if our WebApp could get participants to fulfill any of these three outcomes: (1) HIV testing at least twice over 12 months; (2) STI testing at least twice over the 12 months; and (3) PrEP uptake across the 12 months.

Study Results

Acceptability of Get Connected:

- The full Get Connected WebApp was rated as having better information quality and usefulness than the TLO WebApp.
- Overall satisfaction with the two versions of the WebApp were high, with no differences between the two versions.

HIV Testing:

- 20% of participants had never tested for HIV before enrolling in the study.
- 45% of participants tested twice for HIV over their 12-month period.

- Participants living in different cities benefited differently from the WebApp versions:
 - Atlanta participants using the TLO WebApp were more likely to test for HIV than peers using the full WebApp.
 - Participants in Philadelphia using the full WebApp were more likely to test twice for HIV than peers using the TLO WebApp.
 - Houston users had similar HIV testing behaviors in both WebApp versions.

STI Testing:

- 33% of participants had never tested for STIs before enrolling in the study.
- 31% of participants reported testing twice for STIs over their 12-month period.
- Participants in different cities benefited differently from the WebApp:
 - Participants in Atlanta using the TLO WebApp were more likely to test twice for STIs than peers using the full WebApp.
 - Participants in Philadelphia using the full WebApp were more likely to test twice for STIs than peers using the TLO WebApp.
 - Participants in Houston had comparable STI testing behaviors in both WebApp versions.

PrEP uptake:

- 74 of the 258 participants reported using PrEP during the study period.
- PrEP uptake was similar in both WebApp versions.

Study Implications

- Get Connected is an effective WebApp to motivate young men to get tested for HIV and STIs at least twice per year, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Some users of the WebApp may simply need a test locator, while others may benefit from additional educational resources and content tailored to their needs.
- Efforts to continue promoting PrEP uptake among YMSM are needed.
- The team is now exploring how to make Get Connected available nationwide as a prevention tool.

Authors

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Support

This study was supported by the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institute of Mental Health, and National Institute on Drug Abuse.