

Scaling Up HIV Treatment for Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) in Bangkok

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HIV and MSM in Thailand

Thailand has been hit hard by HIV. 440,000 people are living with HIV in Thailand and more than 1,200 people die each year from HIV-related causes.

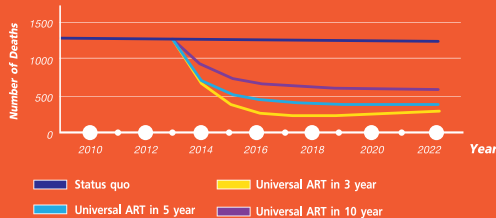
Thailand has successfully curbed the spread of HIV among sex workers and their clients. Its 100% Condom Use Program is world-renowned.

However, its response to HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) has been limited.

HIV prevalence among MSM has risen sharply from around 6% in the late 1990s to as much as 30% today, and continues to grow.

MSM account for over 40% of new HIV cases each year. This figure could go as high as 59% within the next 10 years, according to the Asian Epidemic Model estimate.

Today, 440,000 people in Thailand live with HIV/AIDS. More than 12,500 people will die between 2013 and 2022 if early HIV testing and universal anti-retroviral treatment (ART) for all is not achieved.



MSM in Metropolitan Bangkok

There are around 185,000 men who have sex with men living in metropolitan Bangkok, and 60,000 of whom are at high-risk of infection. Of the high-risk group, only 14,000 men were tested, and 4,000 were diagnosed positive.

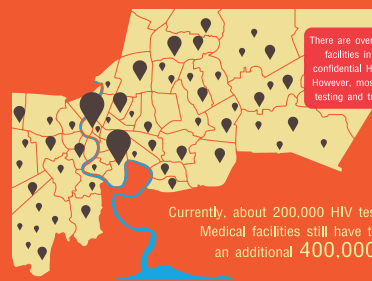
Yet fewer than 1,000 men who tested positive started taking anti-retroviral treatment (ART) medicine, despite being available for free.

There are enough clinics and health personnel in Bangkok to support testing and treatment for all MSM who need it.

Over 90 medical facilities in Bangkok could test and treat all MSM, yet they are left largely unused.

Over 75% of HIV testing and treatment is done in just two research clinics.

About 200,000 HIV tests are performed each year in Bangkok. Yet the medical facilities could perform an additional 400,000 tests each year. This means that more than 65% of HIV testing capacity goes unused each year.



OVER 90
MEDICAL FACILITIES

Currently, about 200,000 HIV tests are performed per year. Medical facilities still have the capacity to provide an additional 400,000 HIV tests per year.

What can be done?

Scaling up HIV testing and treatment services will not only save lives, it will also cut costs.

An additional \$55 million investment over the next decade – just a moderate increase over current levels – will help achieve universal treatment coverage in Bangkok.

This could prevent over 5,000 HIV-related deaths and almost 4,000 new HIV cases (each year).

Public facilities/hospitals can test and treat men who have sex with men effectively and at the lowest cost. They are the best tool to scale-up treatment among Bangkok's MSM.

They can be made more effective by drawing on the successful experiences of research clinics that have created welcoming environments for patients with convenient hours and friendly staff.

Involving experts from research clinics and members of the MSM community in delivering HIV testing, treatment and prevention services will improve the overall quality of service.

Employing multiple recruitment methods will help connect MSM to HIV testing and treatment services.

For example, a peer follow-up system has been shown to be effective in helping MSM who test HIV positive get and sustain life-saving treatment so that they can live healthier and productive lives.

Create Demand

Create demand for testing and treatment services.

Create and stimulate demand for use of HIV testing and treatment services by MSM. Health facilities and MSM communities can join forces in this demand creation and stimulation.

Invest

Invest in early testing and treatment. It will not only save lives, it will also cut costs.

An additional \$55 million investment will increase HIV treatment coverage to 80%. Over 5,000 HIV-related deaths and 3,700 new cases can be prevented each year.

It costs only \$10,000 to save one life from HIV-related deaths.

Scale up

Scale up testing and treatment at public medical facilities.

Public hospitals can test and treat patients effectively and at the lowest cost.

