

## **APPROACH Study Success**

Between February and September 2017, 123 HIV tests were conducted in NL and AB through the APPROACH study pilot. **This high uptake attests to both the need and strong public acceptance of a pharmacy-based HIV point-of-care (POC) testing program.**

“I think that you guys have done a bang-up job just getting this on the go here. I think it’s long overdue and I’m so happy to see it.”

Through survey responses, clients indicated:

- a **strong preference for pharmacy-based POC testing** because it is *easy, quick, hassle-free, very convenient*, and there’s *no need for an appointment*.

“Quick, easy, less stress. Definitely will be recommending to friends.”

- a **strong sense of comfort and trust** in the pharmacists performing the testing, who were *professional, caring, reassuring, personable, knowledgeable, and non-judgemental*, and that the pharmacy consultation room provided a sense of *privacy and security*.

“Once in the private room, the pharmacist was excellent, very friendly and nice. I felt comfortable and safe, not intimidated at all.”

## **Pharmacy-based POC Testing Provides Opportunity for STBBI Education**

On average, clients spent 30 minutes one-on-one with the testing pharmacist. Three-quarters of this time was dedicated to pre- and post-test counselling, educating clients about STBBI risk behaviours, protecting oneself, the importance of regular testing, and treatment options.

“Excellent counselling services provided. The pretalk was positive in nature and delivery. I felt very respected.”

## **Pharmacy-based POC Testing Reaches Those at Risk of HIV Infection**

The average age of clients was 35 years; 76% were male. Two-thirds of those tested reported being single or casually dating/hooking up, and 53% of males and 89% females reported engaging in condomless sex with males. 28% of clients had not been or were unsure of whether they had previously been tested for HIV. Of these, approximately 70% were at moderate, high, or very high risk of having HIV infection according to their engagement in risk behaviors.

## **100% was the Most Frequently Provided Response when Clients were Asked:**

- How confident are you that the pharmacist did a good job of administering your HIV test today?
- How important was it, in your decision to get an HIV test today, that the pharmacy has a private room for testing and consultation?
- How likely are you to also get tested for other infections (e.g., hepatitis C or syphilis) based on the pharmacist’s advice today?
- How likely are you to recommend to your friends that they get tested for HIV at a pharmacy?
- How strongly do you support offering pharmacy-based HIV testing as a regular service?

“I have been putting off getting this [HIV] test for a long time because the idea of a specialized clinic made me nervous, and I also didn't want to do it at a regular blood collection clinic because I wanted to talk about my fears. This was perfect. Thank you!”

## **Next Steps**

We are seeking funding to expand pharmacy testing into additional areas of NL and AB, and to offer testing for hepatitis C and syphilis, in addition to POC testing for HIV.