

Assessing the Impact of the Spring European Testing Week Pilot on Increasing Testing for Viral Hepatitis and HIV and Linking to Care

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BACKGROUND

In 2013, European Testing Week (ETW) started as a yearly HIV testing awareness campaign but since 2015, has grown to also include viral hepatitis. The initiative encourages partners in civil society, health care, and policy institutions in WHO Europe to unite during the last week of November to increase testing efforts and promote awareness of early hepatitis and HIV testing. In May 2018, a Spring ETW (SETW) was piloted, in collaboration with the INTEGRATE Joint Action and European Liver Patients’ Association, to assess the feasibility of implementing ETW during a different season and its impact on increasing integrated activities for hepatitis/HIV, and reaching key populations.

METHODS

All participants were asked to complete a post-SETW online survey via REDCap as the evaluation. The survey had 33 multiple choice and free text questions. Information collected included types of activities, targeted key populations, details on testing activities, satisfaction with SETW and challenges. A comparison was performed between post-ETW data from Nov 2017 with SETW data to evaluate the impact of conducting ETW during Spring.

RESULTS

104 partner organisations participated in the pilot SETW and 33 responded to the online survey (response rate: 32%) while 640 participated in 2017 ETW (response rate: 24%). For SETW, more organisations were registered in the West (51%) and Centre (31.7%) European regions than compared to Nov 2017 (49% and 23% respectively) while there were less in the East (14%). Most organisations were NGOs/CSOs (2017: 66%; SETW: 79%). There was a slight shift in the targeted populations (Table 1). More targeted the general population (76% for SETW, up from 64% in 2017), less MSM (48%, down from 66%) and more PWID (48%, up from 41%). There was an increased focus on other key groups including sex workers, migrants and mobile populations, prisoners and patients with STIs. Similar to past ETWs, respondents primarily conducted testing activities followed by awareness raising and advocacy activities. However, there was an increase in combined disease activities for SETW (15% to 21% for HIV/HCV; 1% to 9% for HBV/HCV) (Figure 1). 33% reported doing activities for all three diseases. There was a decrease in HIV-only activities (49% to 30%). Of those who provided testing data for the pilot, 633 were tested for HBV, 1744 for HCV and 4251 for HIV. Even though more organisations participated in the Nov 2017 ETW, the positivity rates for HBV and HIV were higher during the pilot (HBV: 1.5% to 3.3%; HIV: 0.8% to 1.2%) while the positivity rates for HCV were similar (HCV: 4.5% to 4%). Comparable to past ETWs, the majority (88%) reported linking to relevant referrals if an individual had a reactive test. However, more SETW respondents overall (47%) reported following up to assure confirmatory testing when compared to Nov 2017 where 17% of respondents reported doing follow-up for HBV; 27% for HCV and 44% for HIV.

CONCLUSION

The SETW pilot examined the impact of implementing ETW during a different season. ETW is a well-established initiative and through building upon its existing platform, the pilot successfully implemented a second ETW reaching other key populations, increasing integrated activities for HIV/HBV/HCV and linking a larger percentage of people to care.

Table 1. Target populations for ETW 2017 and Spring 2018 ETW pilot

Who were your target population(s)* during European Testing Week?	2017	2018
MSM	66%	48%
People who inject drugs	41%	48%
Sex workers	34%	45%
Migrants and mobile populations	26%	33%
Prisoners	8%	9%
Patients with sexually transmitted infections	17%	18%
Pregnant women	3%	3%
General population	64%	76%
Youth	39%	18%
Immigrants originating from countries with generalised HIV/HBV/HCV epidemics	15%	15%
People presenting with an HIV indicator condtion	10%	6%
Other	10%	9%

*Respondents could choose more than one target population

Figure 1. Single vs. combined disease activities, 2017 to 2018

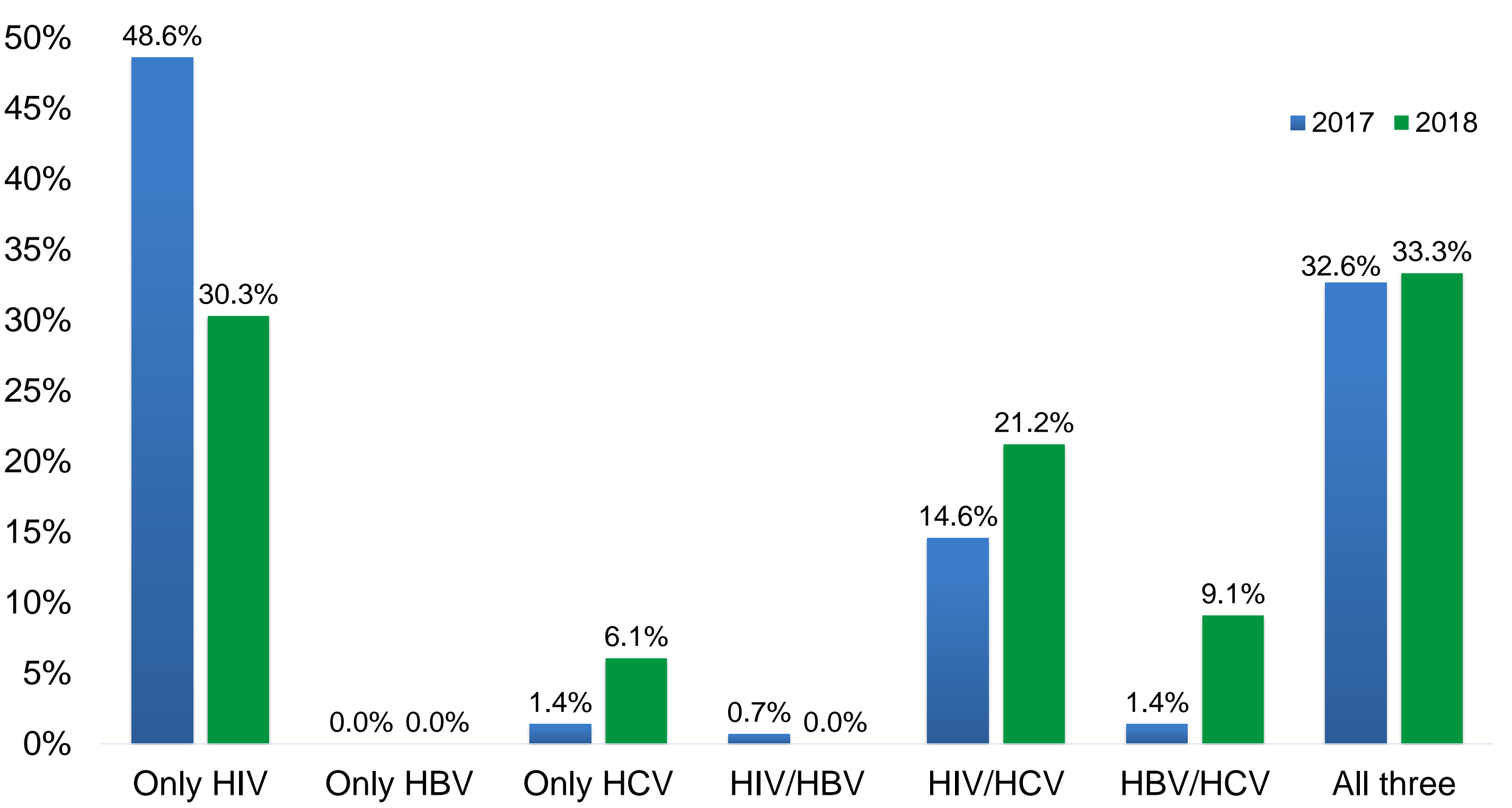


Image 1. Promotional material for the Spring ETW pilot developed by Alianza para la Eliminación de las Hepatitis Víricas en España



Image 2. Promotional material for the Spring ETW pilot developed by HUHIV in Croatia