

Title: Factors influencing uptake of voluntary counselling and HIV testing services by government health workers in central province Kenya.

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Abstract: Voluntary counseling and testing for HIV is an important and effective component of response to HIV / AIDS epidemic. The Government of Kenya is fully committed to providing VCT services throughout Kenya at no cost through mainstream government facilities by public health workers. These health workers who provide this noble service are supposed to be the frontline beneficiaries of VCT services. However current situation shows that this is not the case. This study therefore analyzed key factors that influence uptake of voluntary counseling services by public health workers. The level of VCT services utilization by health workers was compared against social demographic, knowledge, practice, attitude and service provision factors. The study adopted a descriptive cross sectional approach encompassing mainly quantitative data collected from the respondents. A pretested questionnaire was used to collect data. The data collected was summarized using frequencies, percentage, means and standard deviations and further presented using graphs, figures and tables. The data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 11.5. Variables were categorized into groups of factors of interest thus knowledge, attitude, practice and service provision. Proportions were compared using chi square test for non continuous categorical variables and Pearson moments correlation for continuous categorical variables. The health workers had an average age of 41.1 (SD=8.9) years with minimum of 22 and maximum of 57 years. The result showed that most of the health workers (73.1 %) had visited VCT. Most of those who had visited VCT did so to know their status (91.4%) while most of those who had not done so gave reason for it. However, the study showed that 30.9% of health workers had only visited VCT centre for testing only once in their lifetime. The study similarly established that 61 % of health workers had some form of training in HIV / AIDS. On analysis there was no significant relationship between knowledge and attitude management and outcome variables of VCT uptake and frequency of uptake. Using chi square test for difference in proportions" attitude of service provider" were significant determinant of VCT uptake ($\chi^2=11.939$, $df=4$, and $p=0.018$). Waiting time was also found to be significantly associated with VCT uptake ($\chi^2=10.393$, $df=4$ and $p=0.034$) It is therefore recommended that health sector should avail more staff for voluntary testing and counseling and emphasis on client friendly approach. This has clearly been demonstrated significant findings in variables such as service provider availability and attitude and waiting time.