



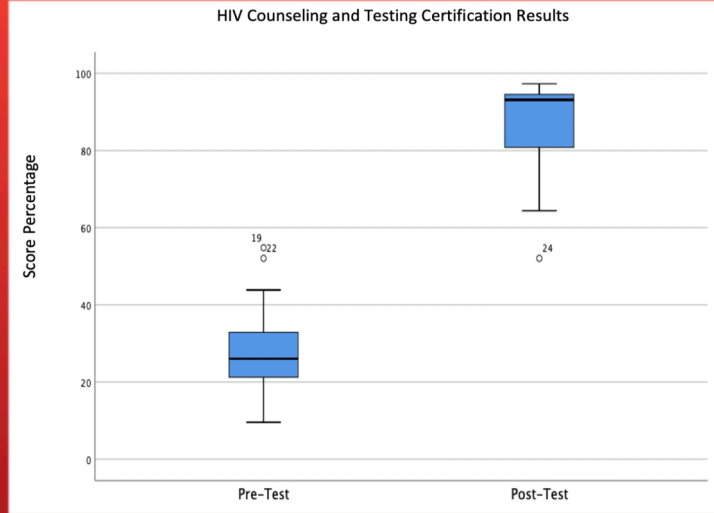
Improving access to HIV testing for women in Davao, Philippines: A multidisciplinary training approach to build the HIV Care Continuum

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BACKGROUND

Southeast Asia has experienced significant progress in reducing new HIV infections with a 9% decline from 2010-2020. The Philippines has been overshadowed by this regional data as the country experienced a 203% increase in HIV cases in the same time period. Studies suggest that less than 10% of the total Filipino population have been tested for HIV, and women ages 18-45 experience a greater gap of only 2% tested. Improving access to HIV testing is imperative to begin to build the HIV Care Continuum, especially given the global aims of 90-90-90 and the ten Sustainable Development Goals that pertain to HIV testing and care.



RESULTS

Pre-test scores indicated low levels of HIV knowledge among participants with a mean score of 27.97 and range from 9.59-54.79 percent. Post-tests were given one week later and included fill-in the blank, multiple choice, and scenario-based questions. Scores drastically increased to a mean of 87.61 and a range from 52.05-97.26 percent. Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test was used to analyze the pre-post test results and showed a high level of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$).

METHODS

Participants represented a multidisciplinary range of organizations including three universities, two nonprofits, three clinics, a social work agency, a midwifery practice, two religious organizations, and tribal leaders. The comprehensive HIV education, counseling, and testing training session took place over one week. Participants were required to take a pre-test to measure HIV knowledge, attend all sessions, and take a post-test to highlight competence and gaps. In January 2020, twenty-eight participants in Davao City were trained and certified in HIV education, counseling, and testing. Twenty-four participants met inclusion criteria for pre-post test biostatistical analysis. Exams were compiled of three parts designed by the Philippines Department of Health to measure competency for certification. Pedagogical techniques such as kinesthetic learning, differentiated instruction in small groups, and game-based learning were integrated within the program.

CONCLUSION

The multidisciplinary, integrative, and immersive training program certified 28 new HIV counselors and testers from diverse community organizations. The approach of training a multidisciplinary team with various backgrounds using three pedagogical techniques was successful in building community capacity to increase testing. HIV education, counseling, and testing are now available for unreached populations in Davao. This first phase is a vital foundation in building the HIV Care Continuum and aiming to reach the core SDG targets for the Philippines.