

Differences in uptake, characteristics, and testing history of clients of *GetCheckedOnline* during scale-up to urban, suburban, and rural communities in British Columbia, Canada

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BACKGROUND:

- Online STI testing services are assumed to reduce testing barriers in less-urban areas, but this has rarely been evaluated.
- *GetCheckedOnline* (GCO, getcheckedonline.com) launched in Vancouver in September 2014.
- Following a successful pilot in urban Vancouver, GCO was expanded to five other urban, suburban, and rural communities in the Vancouver Island and Interior Health Regions in February 2016.

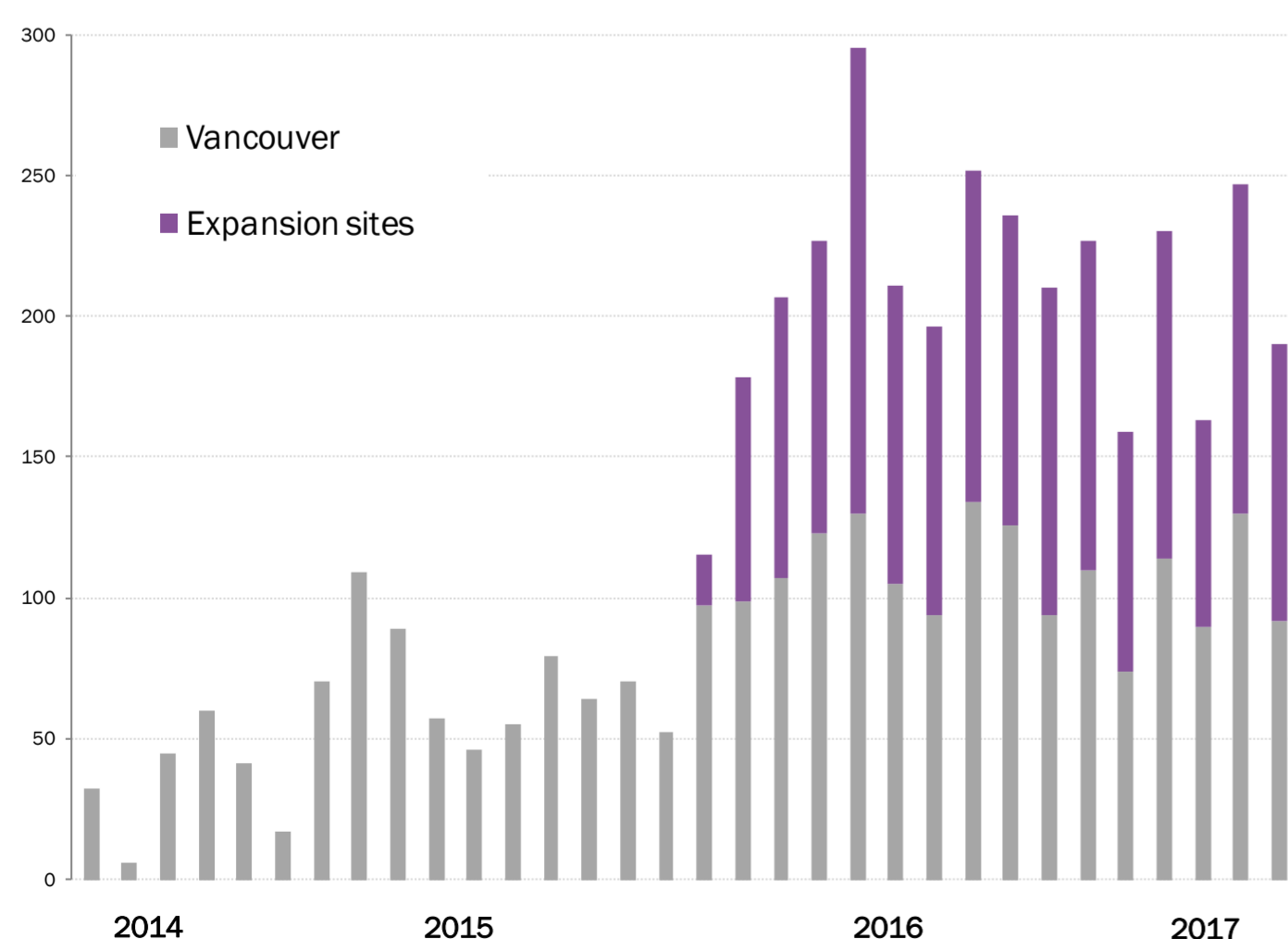
OBJECTIVE:

- To compare measures of GCO program use and characteristics of GCO clients between Vancouver and expansion sites for the first 15 months post scale-up.

METHODS:

- Routinely collected GCO program data and public health laboratory data were used to compare the following variables between Vancouver and expansion sites, per-client or per-episode, as appropriate:
 - Accounts created
 - Specimens submitted
 - Positive test results for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis C
 - Client socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender, ethnicity
 - Client sexual risk: men who have sex with men (MSM), symptoms, contact to an STI, history of STI/HIV testing, condomless vaginal or anal sex with >1 partner
- Trends in accounts were examined pre- (Sep 2014-Jan 2016) and post-expansion (Feb 2016-Apr 2017); other comparisons were restricted to post-expansion period.
- *Chi-square* and *t-tests* were used for all comparisons, $p < 0.05$ considered significant.

Figure: GCO account creations over time, by region



RESULTS:

Table 1: Program uptake by region, Feb 2016-Apr 2017 (* $p < 0.05$)

| Measure | Vancouver n (% of previous) | Expansion sites n (% of previous) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Per client: | | |
| Accounts created | 1673 | 1556 |
| Specimens submitted | 972 (58%) | 823 (53%)* |
| Per test episode: | | |
| Specimens submitted | 1702 | 1082 |
| Positive result | 72 (4%) | 53 (5%) |

Table 2: Socio-demographic and sexual risk characteristics by region, Feb 2016-Apr 2017 (* $p < 0.05$)

| Measure | Vancouver % | Expansion sites % |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Per client: | | |
| | N=972 | N=823 |
| Age <30 years | 40% | 51%* |
| Male | 72% | 59%* |
| White | 57% | 68%* |
| Per test episode: | | |
| | N=1702 | N=1082 |
| MSM | 42% | 24%* |
| Symptoms | 13% | 20%* |
| Contact to STI | 8% | 9% |
| Condomless sex | 44% | 38%* |
| Previous STI | 16% | 13%* |
| Never tested for STI | 9% | 20%* |
| Never tested for HIV | 9% | 15%* |

CONCLUSIONS:

- Scale-up of GCO to five smaller urban, suburban, and rural communities across British Columbia doubled the average monthly enrolment, reaching >1,000 clients, 20% of whom had not previously tested for STI.
- Online testing reaches different populations in different geographic settings, which may reflect differences in testing barriers.
- Specifically, expansion site clients had proportionately greater participation of those <30 years of age, female, and ethnically white.
- Expansion site clients also differed in sexual risk characteristics from Vancouver clients, with more reporting symptoms but fewer reporting unprotected sex or a previous STI diagnosis.

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