

# Expanding the reach of internet-based testing for sexually-transmitted and blood-borne infections: Awareness of GetCheckedOnline among sexual minority men in British Columbia, Canada

**Andrés Montiel<sup>1,2</sup>, Aidan Ablona<sup>1</sup>, Ben Klassen<sup>3</sup>, Kiffer Card<sup>2</sup>, Ihoghosa Iyamu<sup>1,4</sup>, Hsiu-Ju Chang<sup>1</sup>, Devon Haag<sup>1</sup>, David J. Brennan<sup>5</sup>, Daniel Grace<sup>5</sup>, Catherine Worthington<sup>2</sup>, Nathan Lachowsky<sup>2,3</sup>, Mark Gilbert<sup>1,4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>BC Centre for Disease Control, <sup>2</sup>University of Victoria, <sup>3</sup>Community-Based Research Centre, <sup>4</sup>University of British Columbia, <sup>5</sup>University of Toronto

**CAHR Virtual Conference, May 5-7, 2021**

*Conflict of interest Disclosure: I have no conflicts of interest*

E-mail: [andresm@uvic.ca](mailto:andresm@uvic.ca)



@DiSHIresearch | [DiSHIresearch.com](http://DiSHIresearch.com)





# Background

- **GetCheckedOnline** is an internet-based testing program for HIV, Hepatitis C, and other sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) in British Columbia (BC)
- Clients complete an online risk assessment to create a test requisition form, which can be brought directly to participating LifeLabs locations for biospecimen sample collection
- Launched in Vancouver in 2014, the program expanded in 2016 to five additional communities in Interior and Island Health regions (see *Figure*)
- **Objective:** To measure post-expansion awareness and identify associated factors among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM)



*Figure: Regions of GetCheckedOnline availability*

\*Brackets denote number of participating LifeLabs locations per community (if more than one)



# Methods

- Data source: Sex Now 2019
  - Online health survey of gbMSM aged  $\geq 15$  years in Canada
  - BC residents were asked questions related to GetCheckedOnline
- Recruitment:
  - Online ads, newsletters, listservs, and social media outlets (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
  - November 2019 – February 2020
- Analysis:
  - Participants were categorized by Forward Sortation Area (defined by Canada Post) into regions with communities offering GetCheckedOnline, by health authority (i.e., Greater Vancouver, Island, Interior, and BC other)
  - Our primary outcome was awareness of GetCheckedOnline (Yes/No) prior to taking the Sex Now 2019 survey
  - We used logistic regression modelling including all significant factors to explore associations with awareness
  - We report adjusted odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals (AOR [95%CI])





# Results

- Overall, 33.5% of BC Sex Now participants (N=1500) were aware of GetCheckedOnline
- Compared with awareness among Greater Vancouver participants (36%, n=336/932):
  - Island participants were more aware (50%, n=77/155, AOR=2.49 [1.56-4.02])
  - Interior participants were similar (40%, n=18/45, AOR=1.60 [0.69-3.68])
  - other BC regions were less aware (17%, n=47/269, AOR=0.45 [0.29-0.70])
- Greater GetCheckedOnline awareness was associated with:
  - identifying as queer (reference: not queer; AOR=1.50 [1.05-2.13])
  - being out to healthcare providers (reference: not out to providers; AOR=2.12 [1.33-3.43])
  - using  $\geq 3$  geolocation-based sex-seeking apps (reference: 0 apps; AOR=1.95 [1.32-2.91])
  - past-year involvement in LGBTQ-specific activities (reference: no involvement; AOR=1.53 [1.09-2.17])
- Lower GetCheckedOnline awareness was associated with:
  - never testing previously for STIs (reference: testing at a sexual health clinic; AOR=0.21 [0.07-0.55])
  - usually testing through a family doctor, compared with a sexual health clinic (AOR=0.53 [0.35-0.81])



# Discussion

- Awareness of GetCheckedOnline among a sample of gbMSM in BC was highest in regions where the program was available
- Increasing GetCheckedOnline promotion to gbMSM who are not out to their healthcare provider, do not usually test at sexual health clinics, or are less connected with LGBTQ communities may improve program reach