

# HIV testing in Europe: opportunities in primary care.



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## Background and objective

In 2010, 118 335 individuals were newly diagnosed with HIV in the WHO European region. 50% of them were diagnosed late with a CD4 white cell count <350 cells/μl and an estimated one third of the people living with HIV are currently not aware of their serostatus. Guidelines recommend offering an HIV test to all patients with symptoms and signs that could indicate an HIV infection, to patients from high-risk groups and pregnant women. The epidemiological evidence however suggests that testing opportunities are being missed. Increased and more efficient HIV testing is required in Europe, since early diagnosis leads to lower morbidity and mortality and above all lower transmission rates.

The objective of this literature review was to identify barriers and missed opportunities to HIV testing in Europe, both on patient and provider level, to identify characteristics of patients who are diagnosed late and to explore what this could mean for primary healthcare.

## Methods

The Pubmed database was used to obtain articles, using three search strings as shown below. Articles were screened for their relevance to the subject and publications in languages other than English or dated before the introduction of cART were excluded. A total of 57 articles were included.

Figure 1: Flowchart of the article selection process, first search string

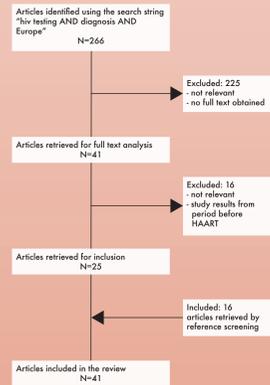


Figure 2: Flowchart of the article selection process, second search string

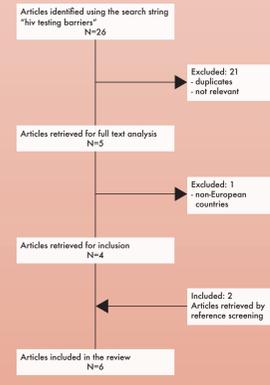
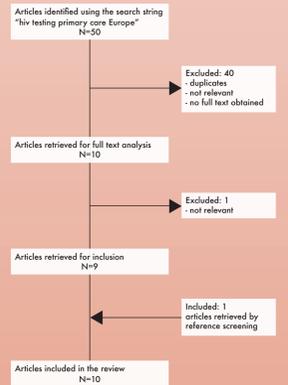


Figure 3: Flowchart of the article selection process, third search string



## Results



### Late presentation is common in Europe

Up to 30% and more depending on the setting

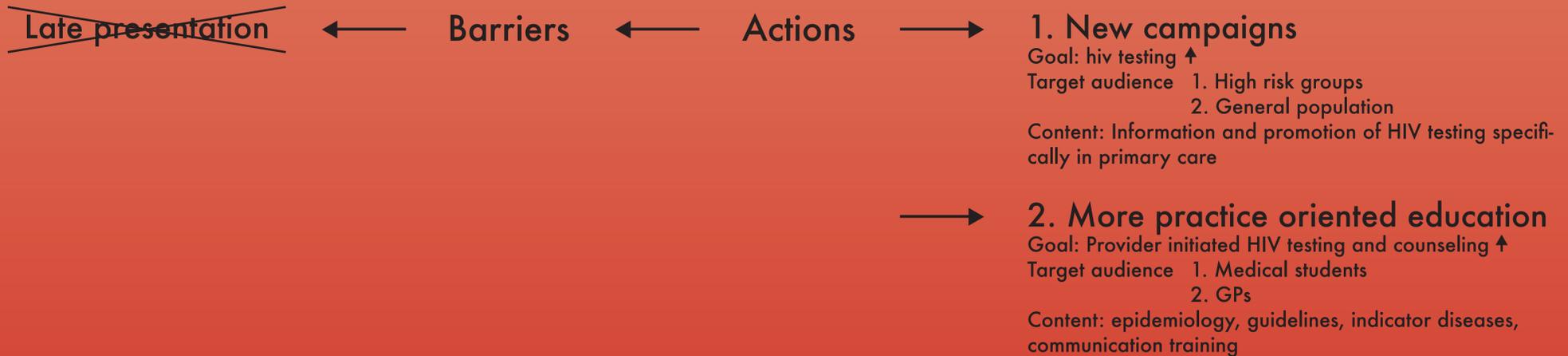
### Low risk for infection = high risk for late diagnosis

Heterosexual – older age – steady relationship

### When a test is offered, patients are very likely to accept

80% - provider initiated testing and counseling is effective

## Conclusion



Primary care is approachable for any patient and primary care providers are in an advantaged position for HIV risk assessment, since they follow a patient and his context over a long period of time. At this point, most European countries are not yet making full use of this possibility. Efforts to increase provider awareness and promote HIV

testing should be made now. In order to move towards lower rates of late testing, lowering the incidence and eventually even eradicating HIV in Europe, a great responsibility but above all great opportunities lie within primary care.