

OUTREACHING HIV RAPID TESTING AT MISTER B IN AMSTERDAM



Another challenge for the Checkpoint volunteers was an outreach project rapid testing. From October 7th 2007 until April 1st 2008, Checkpoint offered MSM an HIV rapid test and vaccination for hepatitis on Sunday afternoons at Mister B, a leather, rubber, tattoo & body piercing shop in Amsterdam. This pilot was initially scheduled for 3 months, but was prolonged 3 months to collect more data since a new high-risk group was found.

1 GOALS

1.1 DO WE REACH A NEW RISK GROUP BY OFFERING AN HIV RAPID TEST AT SUCH A LOCATION AND TIME?

In the United States¹ and Australia² several successful pilots were conducted at gay venues as bath houses, laundrettes, vintage stores and garage sales. In the Netherlands, the rapid test was still not used in outreach activities.

1.2 IS THIS PLACE A GOOD OPTION FOR OUTREACHING WITH THE RAPID TEST?

Vaccinations for hepatitis are now included with a regular STI-check or offered in outreach activities at cruising areas or bars. For the follow-up vaccinations the client has to take time off during

1

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2729284/>

2

http://www.publish.csiro.au/?act=view_file&file_id=SH09008.pdf

business hours. Checkpoint knew from experience that offering the follow-up vaccinations after business hours pleases many clients and results in a much higher compliance.

2 WHY MISTER B?

Up to 2000 Amsterdam had a homo-categorical STI-clinic ran by volunteers, this group approached already Mister B to offer STI-checks for MSM at their shop. The total investment for 4 complete STI-checks in those days took 15 hours staff time, so this pilot was not developed any further in those days.



Figure 1 Mister B in Amsterdam

However, the HIV rapid test takes less man-hours and is easy to offer at different locations. Since Mister B is known to be a store that offers a wide variety of products and always pays attention to promoting safe sex, for Checkpoint they were an ideal partner to run this pilot. Checkpoint checked with the Municipal Health Service Amsterdam, Schorer and STI AIDS Netherlands how they felt about this initiative, and all three considered this idea as very innovative and welcomed this project.

Both parties aim for high quality and therefore a thorough preparation has been done before.

3. STARTING POINTS

- From October 7th until December 31st 2007 every Sunday afternoon from 1 till 6 p.m. Checkpoint offers HIV rapid testing for MSM at the premises of Mister B in the Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam
- Mister B facilitates and the burden on the Mister B staff has to be minimal
- Checkpoint provides the necessary material, processes the test and test results and is responsible for the entire logistics

- The tests are performed by trained Checkpoint volunteers
- Checkpoint provides the necessary insurances for its volunteers
- Checkpoint offers clients the same counseling as on a Friday evening (i.e. Determine™ + OraQuick)
- The price of a rapid test is €20,- which includes a confirmation test if necessary
- Customers can be vaccinated for hepatitis B (free) and/or hepatitis A (€25,- unit cost per vaccination). All participants of this project at Mister B can get their follow-up vaccination as well on Fridays as on Sundays. Mister B will become a new vaccination location in Amsterdam. The owner of Mister B finds it important that clients know if the vaccination is successful therefore Mister B pays for the antibody test for the all participants on Sunday afternoon
- Weekly a short report is mailed to all volunteers and Mister B staff
- If both parties agree, the pilot can be terminated prematurely or prolonged by another 3 months.

4. PROMOTION



Figure 3 Leaflet used to promote this project in gay bars

The promotion of this pilot used the proper channels for MSM. Posters were hung in gay bars in Amsterdam.

Almost 4,000 leaflets were distributed in locations such as gay pubs, bars, saunas and sex shops.

Mister B send out a mailing to their customers about this project and they published this project in Dutch, English and German at their home page.

The Municipal Health Service mentioned this vaccination project on its website, but without specifying the optional extra of the free antibody test afterwards.

Schorer failed to mention this project in time in their digital newsletter E-male.

5. VOLUNTEERS

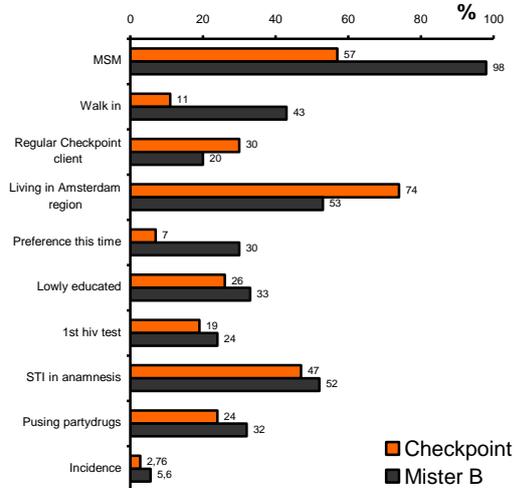
Working on a Sunday afternoon was not attractive for the majority of the Checkpoint volunteers. Even though it was from 1 till 6 p.m., it felt as if their complete Sunday was absorbed by this project. Nevertheless Checkpoint succeeded in putting together a good staff every Sunday.



Figure 2 Piercing room at Mister B used for counselling

The support of the staff of Mister B was fantastic and they did their utmost to make it a pleasant Sunday afternoon for the volunteers.

6. PROFILE VISITORS CHECKPOINT MISTER B



Graph 1 Comparing indicators MSM Checkpoint Mister B to MSM Checkpoint on Fridays in 2007

Not surprising that almost all clients were MSM. Nearly half of the visitors walked in without making an appointment.

They did not live in Amsterdam or its suburbs (zip/postal code < 2200).

One third indicated that they preferred outside-business hours for a test.

An equal portion had a low education level (primary school, secondary education, LBO and MSO).

Visitors reported more STI.

They experimented more with party drugs compared to the Friday evening MSM.

Furthermore, some customers reported that entering Mister B for an hiv test took sometimes weeks. It was explicitly mentioned that the kind of shop was not withholding them to enter this outlet.

7. RESULTS

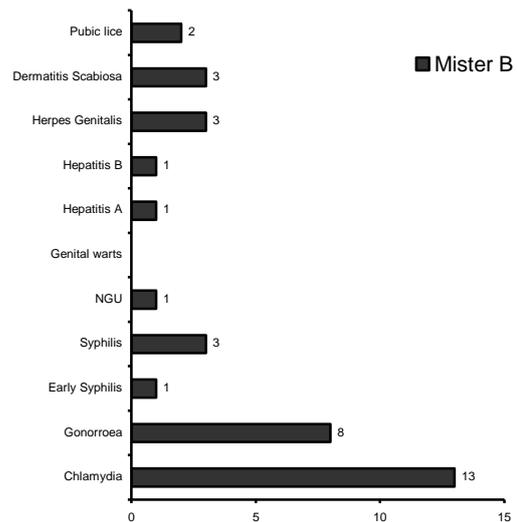
In total 54 MSM were tested and 3 (5.6%) men received a positive result.

From 3 clients we learned they tested positive a few weeks after their negative result at Mister B. The Determine™ and the OraQuick were clearly negative but looking into the sexual anamnesis,

they most probably were in the conversion phase. If we could have used the Determine™ P24 antigen rapid test, the incidence would have risen to 11.2%.

8. STI IN ANAMNESIS

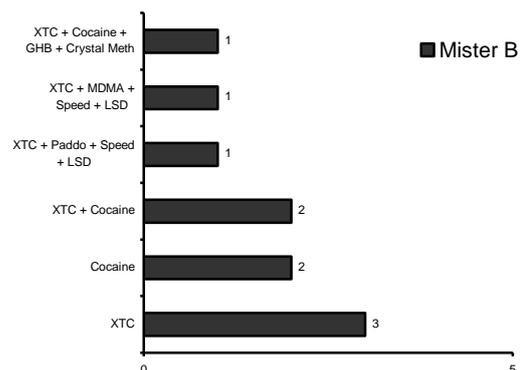
32 of the 54 MSM on Sunday afternoon reported one or more STI in their anamnesis.



Graph 2 STI reported by MSM Checkpoint Mister B

9. PARTY DRUGS

10 visitors reported the use of party drugs.



Graph 3 Party drug used by MSM Checkpoint Mister B

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1. DID CHECKPOINT REACH A NEW HIGH-RISK GROUP AT MISTER B?

By choosing this location Checkpoint aimed at the MSM who frequents the gay leather scene but we only saw MSM that did not identify themselves at all with this gay scene.

The bigger part had a low education level and were living outside Amsterdam, reported more STI and experimented more with party drugs than we used to see on Friday evening.

The fact Mister B was selling leather, rubber, did body piercings and tattoos was no problem for these MSM to come to Checkpoint.

Rapidity, anonymity and time of the day were the main reasons for choosing this location. Some people used the excuse of a shopping afternoon in Amsterdam as a reason to come to Checkpoint Mister B.

Time and place, therefore, have proved to be an important factor for several MSM to be tested.

At the 17th World Aids Conference in Mexico City in 2008, Checkpoint Zurich presented their abstract³ about a similar project in the Swiss gay scene. They took the hiv rapid test to gay bars, gay saunas and dark rooms. In this way they doubled the number of hiv test and findings of hiv positives in their city. They also noted that place and time of providing the test was very important.

10.2 WAS MISTER B A GOOD OUTREACH LOCATION?

Several visitors did an hiv do-it-yourself-test at home before coming to Checkpoint Mister B.

During counseling it was noted that this location could be an additional point to collect material in the local ManTotMan project⁴ that facilitates MSM to do an STI and hiv test.

Not every MSM is attracted by the same method, so for this group it is a necessity to offer different ways for STI testing, especially outside office hours.

William Koevoets & Stan Van Loon

Coordinators Checkpoint Amsterdam

December 1st 2008. (Dutch version)

November 6th 2009 (English version)

³

<http://www.aids2008.org/Pag/Abstracts.aspx?AID=6251>

⁴ <http://www.mantotman.nl/>