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Text Messaging to Promote Uptake of HIV Testing Amongst African Communities in Nottingham: A Feasibility Study

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Why SMS (Texting) for Health Promotion?

- Inexpensive
- Wide reach
- Able to access hard-to-reach groups
- Cost effective
- But - most research re. HIV has focused on adherence, general awareness raising, retention & appointment reminders (not testing)
- A few SMS-based studies promoting HIV testing in Africa, with promising results.....

(Odeny et al, 2014 de Tolly et al, 2012 Chib et al, 2012 Lim et al, 2008; Muessig et al, 2013; van Veithoven et al, 2013)



Research Aim

- To explore the feasibility of using a mobile phone based SMS text-messaging intervention to increase uptake of HIV testing amongst African communities in Nottingham

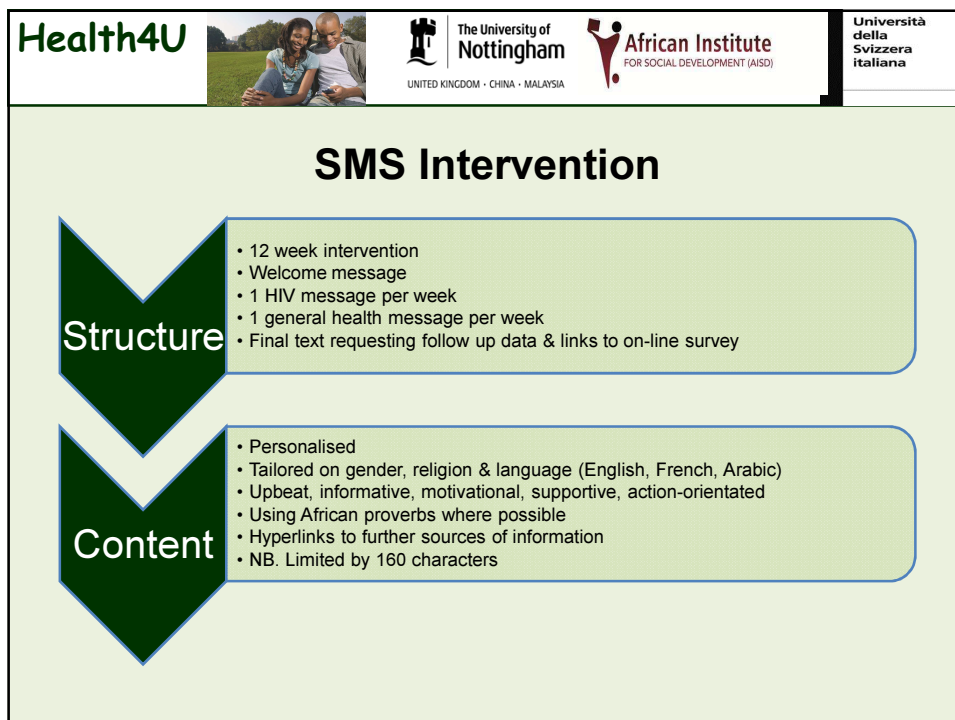
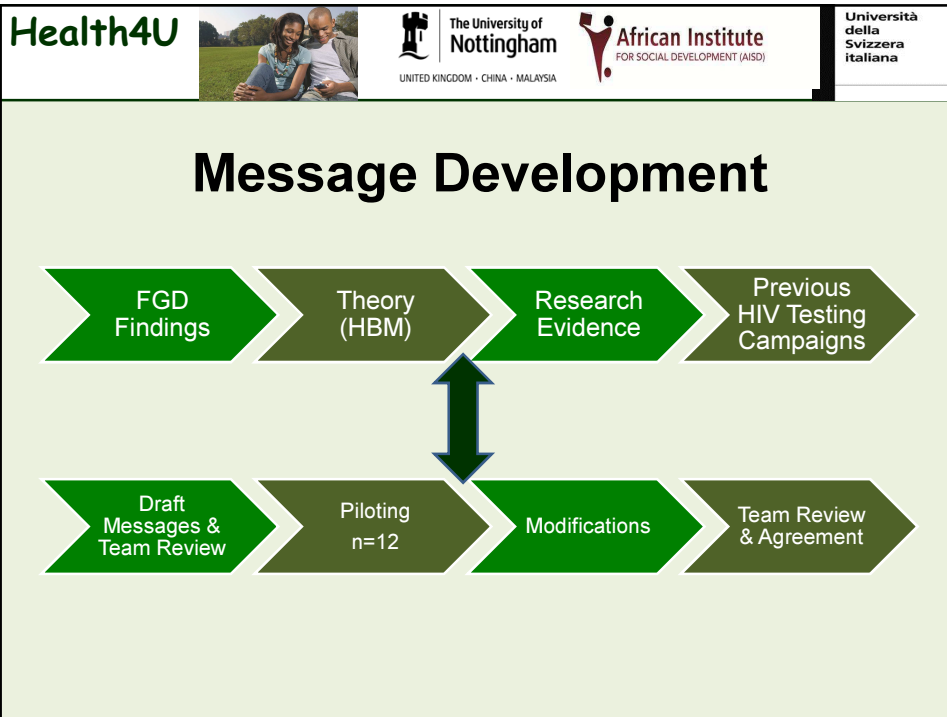
Research Objectives





- To identify views regarding HIV testing amongst African communities in Nottingham
- To collaboratively design and implement a culturally appropriate SMS based intervention based on the target community perceptions
- To evaluate whether the intervention leads to a change in self-reported uptake of HIV testing (**primary outcome**)
- To evaluate whether the intervention leads to a change in self-reported (i) HIV-related knowledge and (ii) attitudes to testing (**secondary outcomes**)
- To explore the appropriateness of follow up measures and processes
- To assess the acceptability of the intervention

Phase	Focus	Activities and Methods
A ↓	Project set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting a community research team (n=11) Research capacity building and community engagement
B ↓	Formative research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 qualitative focus groups representing different African communities (n=48 in total)
C ↓	Message development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative development meetings Message piloting and refinement
D ↓	Development of baseline and follow up measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and piloting of baseline and follow up survey tools
E ↓	Intervention implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment to the main intervention (n=172) Face to face administration of baseline survey Administration of SMS intervention
F ↓	Follow up of primary and secondary outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone calls to follow up all participants (n=76, 45%) Analysis of pre/post intervention questionnaire data (n=60, 35.5%)
G	Process evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured telephone interviews (n=21)

Health Belief Model Construct	Relevance to HIV
Perceived susceptibility to HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliefs about prevalence, risk and the possibility of contracting HIV
Perceived severity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge about HIV Views on treatment, prognosis, outcomes and the consequences of having HIV
Perceived benefits of testing for HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views on the benefits and outcomes of HIV testing
Perceived barriers for HIV testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social, economic, cultural, practical and health-service barriers to HIV testing
Cues to action & self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views on strategies that encourage and support HIV testing and positive health behaviours

FGD Findings: Views on Proposed SMS Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive response to the concept of SMS Trusted source Personalised Different languages Concern about boredom & unfair targeting – messages should be not just about HIV No strong confidentiality concerns No consensus re. message frequency/timing







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Recruitment & Participants

- Recruited via community research team
- 172 participants (original target was 120)
- Wide range of African countries
- Men (50.8%) & women (39.6%)
- Christian (60.4%); Muslim (26.6%)
- Previous testing history: 61%

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Outcomes

Primary Outcome	Secondary Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow Up: N=76 (45%) • 8 self-reported having an HIV test (10.5%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow Up: N=60 (35.5%) • Positive trends in knowledge items • Positive trends in intention to get tested in future • Positive trends re. general health behaviours/quality of life



Evaluation

- Intervention viewed positively
- High acceptability
- Provided new information, support, motivation & helped to allay fears
- No reported negative consequences or issues with confidentiality/privacy
- Widespread sharing of messages
- Internet links not followed

Yes it did help me. One day when you sent me one of your texts I just started thinking a lot about having this test (P2)

I think it was good....I learnt a lot things about getting checked for HIV, all kinds of things to do with your health which you wouldn't know. (P4)



Conclusions

- Text messaging to promote HIV testing amongst African communities is feasible and acceptable
- More research is needed to evaluate outcomes, with a larger sample, a control group and a longer follow up period
- Outcomes are broadly comparable with face to face community based HIV testing interventions (cf. Brady et al 2011 – achieved a testing uptake of 12.1%)
- Text messaging can be an appropriate adjunct to other health promotion strategies



**Thank you
for listening**

**Any
questions?**



For more information, reports, tools & references, contact:

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<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/health4u/index.aspx>