

HIV Testing – Some facts and thoughts

Notes for a Presentation to AIDS 2006,
Toronto

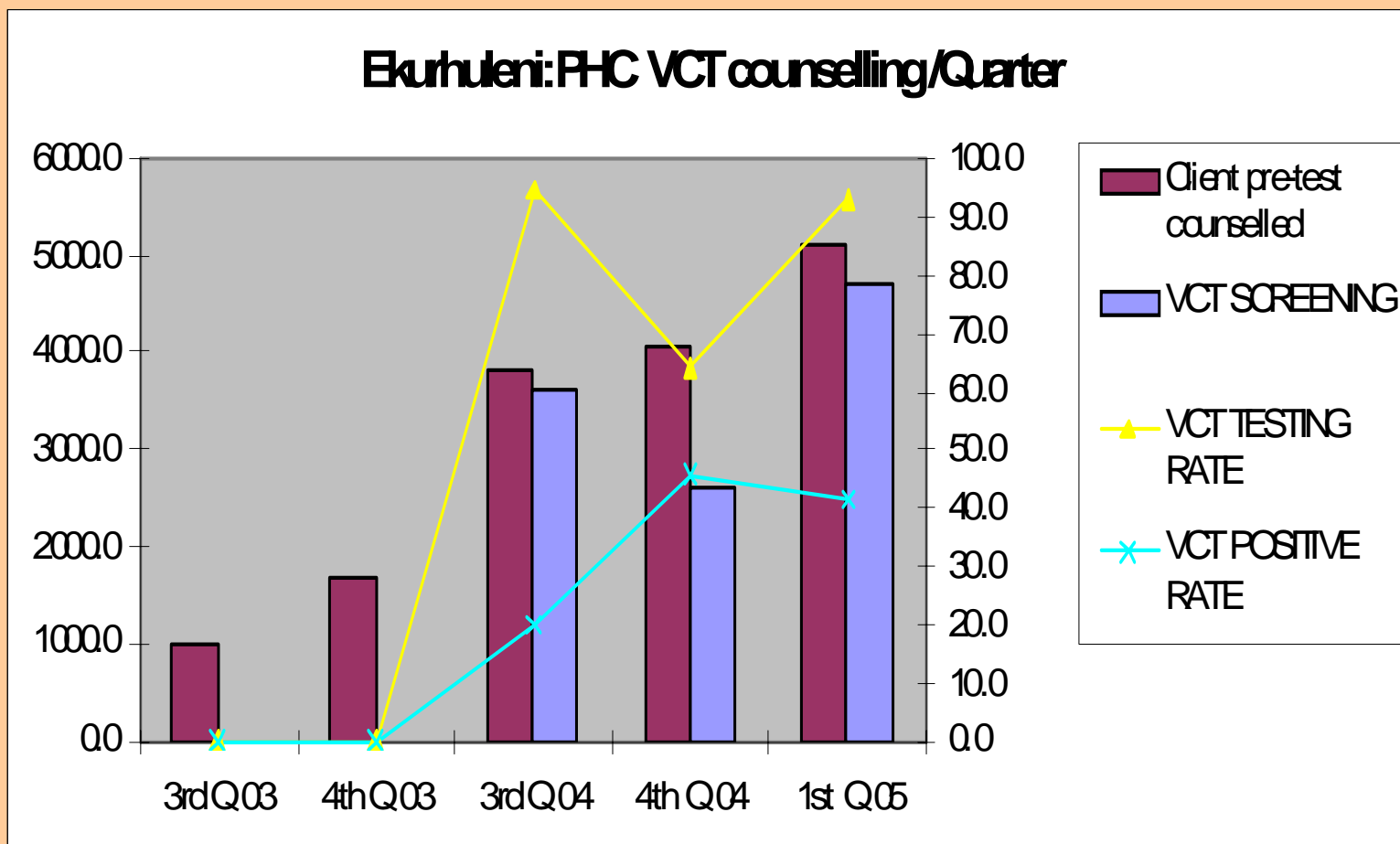
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Access to Treatment has increased uptake of VCT

- Health facilities providing **voluntary counseling and testing (VCT)** have doubled from 1 500 in 2002/03 to 3 700 in 2004/05.
- The number of people counseled for testing in the public sector rose from 413 000 in 2002/03 to 691 000 in 2003/04 and 1,3 million in 2004/05.
- The total number of people tested during 2003/04 was 511 843 compared with 247 287 in the previous year.

– SOUTH AFRICA'S COMPREHENSIVE HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMME: A *FACT SHEET* - MAY 2006

Utilization of programs: VCT



Access to treatment also revealed shortcomings of VCT

- Forty-one percent of professional nurses in the sampled primary health care (PHC) facilities were trained in voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) (range 7% - 88%). *Low VCT training rates are of concern*, given the intervention's importance and early diagnosis of HIV infection, and early entry of clients into the comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme including treatment with antiretroviral drugs (ARVs).
- The uptake of HIV testing was high in all the sub-districts with 84% of clients accepting testing (range 57% - 99%). However, the availability of lay counselors, whose job includes the marketing of VCT, was low in a number of sub-districts. Where these were available there were disparities in their remuneration between and within sub-districts.
- The HIV positive rate amongst those who were tested was 40% (range 57% - 99%). *Despite the high HIV positive rate in the PHC facilities, systems for ongoing follow up of clients who tested positive were often lacking or weak.*

Some general points

- Lack of monitoring and assessment of HIV testing trends
- Lack of investment in testing, promotion of testing & counseling
- Barriers not VCT - but lack of access and incentive
- Increase in HIV testing a human resource issue

Yes to scale up of HIV testing

- A human right
- But what is counseling for? Do we do it because it is a luxury or a necessity?
- Raise other diseases to level of HIV, not other way

Way forward

- Routine offer *and recommendation* – with counseling
- Active promotion of testing outside health facilities:
 - Target people at risk of acquisition & transmission
 - Link to prevention messages and services