

Evaluation of Counseling Outcomes (ECO) with Rapid Testing

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Project Description: The planned research involves collaboration between researchers at CAPS and the director of the AIDS Office in the Department of Public Health, Berkeley, CA, who organized and oversees an HIV counseling and testing program at a local gay bathhouse. This study will evaluate whether bathhouse patrons who use a new rapid testing program, which has a 20-minute wait for results, benefit from counseling. Data will be collected from patrons using the rapid testing program and will be compared to existing data from patrons who accessed the program when it had a standard, 1-week wait for results (The BASES Study).

This study will use the same questionnaire and follow the same study procedures used in BASES and will address the following specific aims:

- 1) Compare the benefit of counseling using rapid testing versus standard testing, specifically,
 - a. engagement in a risk reduction plan and
 - b. reduction in sexual risk behavior
- 2) Document what counselors have to say about conducting counseling with rapid testing.

Significance: In the US, Men who have sex with men have the highest HIV infection rates among all risk groups with an estimated 42% of annual new infections continuing to occur in this population and more than half the new infections occurring in California. Most (77%) high-risk men (men who have unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners) also go to gay bathhouses. To reach these men, the Berkeley AIDS Office operated a standard HIV testing program in a local gay bathhouse for the past three years. Recently, they have introduced rapid HIV testing. It is believed that the benefits of counseling may be compromised with rapid HIV testing.