WhatsApp as a tool to support recently diagnosed gay men with HIV in Peru

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INTRODUCTION
Peru

- Epidemic concentrated among gay and bisexual men (12%); TW (30%)
- Only 40% of PLWHA on HAART
- Mobile Internet \(\rightarrow\) fastest growing segment of the market (Latin America)
- Peru: High use of Smartphones (70% of penetration)
Via Libre

- NGO, 27 years, HIV & sexual health
- Research and integrated services
- 9% of diagnosis of HIV of the country
- 5% of treated PLWHA in the country
- ICTs…
HIV continuum of care

2\textsuperscript{nd} appointment

- Diagnosed
- Linked
- On ART
- U1N
Objective

Increase linkage
DESCRIPTION
Participants

✓ >17
✓ Male
✓ Diagnosed in the last 3 months
✓ Randomized: 40 intervention; 40 SOC
✓ Main outcome: Linkage at 60 days
Procedures

- Training of counselors
- Identification of barriers
- Design and Validation of SMS
Identification of barriers

- Interviews (barriers):
  - Emotional support
  - Acceptance of the diagnosis
  - Promoting changes in lifestyles (new start)
  - Benefits of treatment
  - Negative perception of medication
  - Stigma
  - Logistics (appointments, etc.)

- Design and validation of SMS (IMB)
Training of counselors

- HIV knowledge
- Barriers
- Language (neutral, simple, etc.)
- Communication (social media/mobile) ➔ 2 way text messaging
- Pilot (role playing)
LESSONS LEARNED
Results

- Participants in the intervention arm were more likely to be linked to care within 60 days, though not significantly (83% vs. 64%)
- Highly accepted
- Qualitative analysis (published) → coping behaviors, mental/physical symptoms (→ > training of counselors)
Implementation challenges

- Lack of trained counselors (**crucial**)
- Organizing focus groups with positive gay men to validate the messages (→ interviews)
- Low initial enrolment rate due to fear of loss of confidentiality (→ neutrality, no massive, role playing)
Scaling - up

- Since may 2016 at regular service of VIA LIBRE (manual)
- > 250 participants being followed-up
- 75% accepts the new strategy
- 25% more of linked (after and before) ...more points to be analyzed later...

- **Important**: continuous training of counselors...
Training of counselors

- 1 counselor reached >>>>>> clients
- Continuous
- Updates
- Simple format and language
- Tools: e-learning, mobile app → piloted by VIA LIBRE and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance
Tools for counselors

E-learning
- YouTube channel
- Open

Mobile app
- Android
- Alpha version
- Training and follow-up
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