Animation as an informing and encouraging tool for the usage of HIV self-tests

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Abstract

For the first time, an HIV self-test is now available to people living in Canada. HIV self-tests remove many of the barriers seen in standard point-of-care testing. Yet, some barriers remain. Functioning as public health tool, an animation is being developed to promote the safe and accurate usage of HIV self-tests. This animation aims to decrease anxiety and psychological information avoidance and aims to appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Introduction

Inadequate rates of testing are a major contributing factor to the HIV epidemic in Canada. It is estimated that 13-27% of people living with HIV in Canada are undiagnosed2,4. Less testing results in later diagnoses, worse health outcomes, and the inadvertent passing along of HIV2.

HIV self-tests (figure 1) increase rates of testing by vastly reducing the barriers associated with point-of-care testing such as limited access to care and distressing clinic experiences4.

Animation is an effective tool for informing an audience about biomedical concepts5. This research aims to extend animation’s utility beyond just informing. This animation should also be encouraging.

The purpose of this research project is to promote benefits of HIV self-tests and address remaining psychological barriers to HIV testing by applying health campaign strategies and prioritizing visual styles that appeal to a diverse audience.

Materials & Methods

The audience and format were identified early in the process after thorough research. Training and review has occurred continuously.

Audience
People in Canada who would benefit from taking an HIV test, people who have higher rates of HIV prevalence or lower rates of testing.

Format
2D and 3D “watercolor” animation

Designed for viewing in segments for social media and viewing as a whole on web platforms, multifarious narration to represent diverse audience and give impression of testing popularity.

Pre Production

Training
Autodesk Maya animation with MnPRX watercolor plug-in and Adobe After Effects animation.

Review
Bimonthly meetings with community advisory committee (CAC) made up of people with lived and professional experience with HIV.

Production

Figure 1. An image of the self-test from the Internet, now available in Canada.

Figure 2. Overview timeline of project process

Figure 3. Images from animation renders- aerial view of Canadian home (left) and test kit (right)

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References


Conclusions

The results of this project address the need of promoting HIV self-tests to Canadians. The animation’s careful design provides a solution to the barrier of information avoidance and HIV-related anxiety. This project aimed to contribute to Canada’s goal of having 90% of people living with HIV aware of their status. Future plans include informally evaluating the success of the animation by analyzing social media analytics and discretionary surveys hosted on Canadian HIV organizations’ websites such as on the I’m Ready website (readytoknow.ca).

Anticipated significance

The success of self-tests, and this animation, could directly improve the health of individuals living with HIV by providing them with the opportunity to be diagnosed earlier. This research project could contribute to Canada reaching its 90-90-90 goal, which is having of “90% of all people living with HIV know their status, 90% of those diagnosed receive antiretroviral treatment, and 90% of those on treatment achieve viral suppression”1.

This animation and its documentation can help inform future communicators on decreasing information avoidance in the context of diagnostic tests while informing and educating the viewer. This animation also gives an example of less commonly used stylistic features like watercolor rendering, multifarious narration, and animation designed for segmented viewing on social media. Having examples of these less commonly used styles can help inform future biomedical communication projects.