Implementation of HIV re-testing guidelines in Karatina District Hospital (DH)

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Background
Kenya adopted World Health Organization (WHO) HIV re-testing guidelines in 2010. The guidelines recommend annual re-testing of the general population and re-testing of HIV negative clients in cases of indeterminate results, generalized epidemics and based on risk. Prior to this, re-testing was done every three months thus unnecessarily increasing workload and depleting testing commodities.

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Objective
To implement HIV re-testing guidelines

Methods
The guidelines were introduced in Karatina DH in mid 2011 by involving the management and HIV counselling and testing (HTC) providers. The HTC providers were taken through the re-testing guidelines during a continuous medical education (CME). A job aid was printed by CHS and distributed to all testing points in the hospital. Mentorship on the same was done by CHS staff and during supervision by the DASCO and the facility HTC coordinator.

Results
Outpatient department (OPD) data were reviewed from November 2012 to January 2013. Among the 934 clients tested, 27.8% were new testers. Another 11% had been tested in the previous three months, of whom 55.9% had a documented reason for re-testing. A further 13.2% were tested in the previous four to eight months, of whom 43.9% had a documented reason for re-testing. The proportion tested over nine months prior was 62.3%. This showed that 99.5% were tested in accordance with the re-testing guidelines.

The documented reasons for re-testing were: couples (where one partner sought HIV test as an individual then brought their partner for couple HIV testing) 50% (n=100); previous exposure in the last three months 16%; post-exposure 11%; clinical findings suggestive of HIV infection 11%; denial of previous HIV positive result 2%; indeterminate result 9% and a further 1% due to lack of a referral form.

Conclusion
Re-testing guidelines can be successfully implemented at public health facilities. Mentorship, leadership through an HTC coordinator and provision of job aids play a key role in this. The strategy can be replicated in other facilities.