

## Family-Based HIV Voluntary Counseling and Testing in Patients at Risk for Tuberculosis

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### Project Description

This study tests the efficacy of an intervention utilizing HIV rapid testing and integration of HIV Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) into Tuberculosis (TB) evaluation and home-based VCT for family members, to overcome identified logistical and psychological barriers to HIV VCT among new TB patients and their family members.

The specific aims of the study are:

1. To determine the uptake of and barriers to HIV VCT among a cross-sectional sample of 2,000 TB evaluation patients offered same-day results HIV counseling and testing at the Uganda National TB and Leprosy Programme outpatient TB clinic at Old Mulago Hospital in Kampala, Uganda
2. To conduct a randomized trial of HIV VCT among 600 households comparing VCT uptake between home-based VCT and TB clinic-based VCT for family and household members of TB evaluation patients
3. To investigate the effectiveness of home-based and TB clinic-based VCT in linking HIV+ persons to HIV medical care and social support

Through this study's dissemination plan and the proposed policy and community forums, information on a successful model could be made rapidly available to key stakeholders responsible for setting national policy and local HIV/AIDS control programs.

### Significance

From our pilot data we have evidence to suggest that a strategy like the one proposed here could be up to ten times more efficient in detecting HIV infection than current generalized HIV testing strategies. This strategy also builds on significant pre-existing TB control infrastructure making it easier to implement across the region in the absence of much needed improvements in healthcare infrastructure.

### Interesting Findings

- Fear of stigma is often reported as a reason for not seeking HIV testing or evaluation for TB.
- Overlapping epidemics of HIV and TB have produced concerns of enhanced stigma towards HIV-TB co-infected persons.
- TB and HIV are linked in patients' minds.
- TB stigma is associated with fears of casual contagion.
- HIV stigma is associated with blaming and shaming attitudes towards persons with HIV.

**Project End Date:** March 2011

