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The barriers and facilitators within HIV and STI testing interventions for black African and black Caribbean migrants in the United Kingdom: A systematic review and narrative synthesis

Ritu Khanna

UK

Abstract

Background:

Despite stable HIV and STI prevalence among black Africans (BA) and black Caribbeans (BC) in the UK, testing rates among these populations remain low. Enhancing access and availability to sexual health testing services is crucial to optimise sexual health outcomes, reduce transmission rates, and alleviate the disproportionate burden of disease experienced by these populations. This review systematically examines interventions aimed at improving HIV/STI testing for BA and BC in the UK, identifying key barriers and facilitators of testing behaviours to inform the development of tailored interventions.

Methods:

A comprehensive search strategy was conducted across five databases, resulting 21 studies selected, conducted after 2008. Inclusion criteria were applied to select studies evaluating the effectiveness of HIV/STI testing interventions among BA and BC adults in the UK. Data extraction, synthesis quality assessment and risk of bias were completed. Qualitative and quantitative results for the systematic review and narrative synthesis were utilised to enable comparison due to heterogeneity.

Results:

The review included a total of 21 studies, employing various intervention strategies. Personal- and interpersonal-related, provider-related, and system-related factors emerged as significant themes influencing testing uptake. Within these themes, subthemes included knowledge and risk perceptions, stigma and discrimination, confidentiality and autonomy, the patient-provider relationship, cultural and linguistic competency, and testing type. The review highlighted the effectiveness of home-based testing, community-based point-of-care testing, and interventions that were targeted, accessible and integrated.

Conclusion:

This systematic review provides valuable insights into the facilitators and barriers influencing HIV/STI testing among BA and BC in the UK. The findings underscore the importance of interventions which encourage the acknowledgement of the social, cultural and structural contexts of BA and BC. These insights can inform the development of effective interventions and policies to bridge the implementation gap between effective tools and strategies and their translation into social and ecological contexts.

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