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**Acceptability of sexually transmitted infections partner  
notification and referral using provider-initiated  
modality by text messages from health care workers  
among men in the taxi industry Gauteng Province**

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# Background

Partner notification (PN) and referral is beneficial in controlling the spread of STIs if implemented correctly (Lewis & Marumo, 2009).

In South Africa, the current utilization of patient-initiated partner-notification system using a notification and referral-slip in the management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is limited and the reality is that only a limited number of sexual partners are ever notified (Bilardi et al. 2010; Sahu et al. 2014).

Moreover, the use of electronic communication like SMS can be used to facilitate partner notification given the increased number of people globally who have access to cell phones (Tomnay et al. 2005).

# Setting description



# Purpose of the study

The aim of the study was to assess acceptability of provider-initiated partner notification using short-message-service (SMS) to personal mobile phones of the sexual partners.

We also collected baseline data to determine self-reported occurrence of an STI and the use of the current patient initiated partner notification system using notification and referral slips.

# Methodology

## Study design

- ❑ A quantitative survey using anonymous structured self-administered and researcher assisted questionnaires

## Study setting and sample

- ❑ Participants were recruited from nine taxi ranks around Tshwane district and a sample size of 722 was achieved.

## Data analysis

- ❑ Stata IC version 13 was used for analysis.



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# Results

Variables	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age category (missing values = 12)</b>		
19-24	43	6.0
25-34	283	39.9
35-44	232	36.7
45-54	93	13.1
>54	59	8.3
<b>Highest level of education (missing value = 1)</b>		
No formal schooling	7	1.0
Primary school	51	7.1
Secondary school	316	43.8
Matric	285	39.5
Tertiary education	62	8.6
<b>Living arrangements</b>		
Wife	260	36.3
Girlfriend	133	18.6
Family members	142	19.8
Alone	181	25.3





# Awareness and knowledge of STI symptoms

HEA

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Ever heard of STIs</b>		
Yes	692	96.5
No	25	3.5
<b>Source of information about STIs</b>		
Health care providers	308	44.2
Media	178	25.5
Awareness campaigns	94	13.5
Word of mouth	117	16.8
<b>Common STI symptoms in men</b>		
Itching in genital area	174	28.8
Discharge from penis	270	44.6
Pain when urinating	114	18.8
Genital ulcers	43	7.1
Pain during sex	4	0.7

# Awareness of STI symptoms cnt...

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Men can have STIs without symptoms at an early stage of infection</b>		
Yes	242	34.2
No	319	45.1
No sure	146	20.7
<b>Have been diagnosed with an STI in the past 12 months (missing values = 1)</b>		
Yes	40	5.6
No	680	94.4



# Perceived use of PN using referral slip

Response	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Importance of telling a partner when infected with a STI (no missing values)</b>		
Not important	13	1.8
Important	317	43.9
Very important	392	54.3
<b>Tell sexual partner when infected with a STI (missing values = 6)</b>		
Yes	18	2.5
No	0	0
Not sure	698	97.5
<b>Possibility of delivering a referral slip to a sexual partner (missing values = 6)</b>		
Yes	670	93.2
No	40	5.6
Not sure	9	1.2
<b>Perceived use of referral slip from sexual partner (missing values = 4)</b>		
Yes	659	91.8
No	39	5.4
Not sure	20	2.8



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# Acceptability of PN with SMS notification

## Perceived ease of delivering a referral slip to sexual partner

Easy	504	69.5
Not easy	194	26.9
Not sure	26	3.6

## Acceptability of SMS notification of STIs from HCWs (missing value = 1)

Yes	452	62.7
No	234	32.5
Not sue	35	4.8

## Reasons for non-acceptability of SMS notification of STIs (n=109)

Prefer face to face disclosure	55	50.5
SMS is not reliable	47	43.1
SMS could cause conflict	7	6.4

## Preference type of notification for STI referral (missing values = 1)

Slip from partner	175	24.3
SMS from clinic	178	24.7
Face to face by partner	368	51.0



# Discussion and Conclusions

- Almost all minibus taxi drivers had awareness of STIs and they cite the health facility as the source of information.
- Despite the high level of STI awareness, only a small proportion had knowledge about the symptoms related to the infections.
- The minibus taxi drivers knew the importance of notifying sexual partners once diagnosed with STIs but were not willing to tell if they are infected.
- The high acceptability of provider-initiated partner-notification using SMS from a healthcare provider and the high perceived use of a patient-initiated partner-notification referral slip suggests that there is still more work to be done in supporting and ensuring consistent implementation of patient-initiated partner-notification.

# References

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# Thank You

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