

## Publication

### Non-uptake of HIV testing in children at risk in two urban and rural settings in Zambia: a mixed-methods study

#### **Journal Article (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)**

**ID** 3564644

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**Year** 2016

**Title** Non-uptake of HIV testing in children at risk in two urban and rural settings in Zambia: a mixed-methods study

**Journal** PLoS ONE

**Volume** 11

**Number** 6

**Pages / Article-Number** e0155510

**Mesh terms** Adult; Caregivers, psychology; Child; Family Characteristics; Female; HIV Infections, virology; HIV-1, isolation & purification; Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice; Humans; Male; Mass Screening, statistics & numerical data; Qualitative Research; Rural Population; Urban Population; Zambia, epidemiology

This article investigates reasons why children who were considered at risk of HIV were not taken for HIV testing by their caregivers. Qualitative and quantitative data collected in Zambia from 2010-11 revealed that twelve percent of caregivers who stated that they had been suspecting an HIV infection in a child in their custody had not had the child tested. Fears of negative reactions from the family were the most often stated reason for not testing a child. Experience of pre-existing conflicts between the couple or within the family (aOR 1.35, 95% CI 1.00-1.82) and observed stigmatisation of seropositive children in one's own neighbourhood (aOR 1.69, 95% CI 1.20-2.39) showed significant associations for not testing a child perceived at risk of HIV. Although services for HIV testing and treatment of children have been made available through national policies and programmes, some women and children were denied access leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment-not on the side of the health system, but on the household level. Social norms, such as assigning the male household head the power to decide over the use of healthcare services by his wife and children, jeopardize women's bargaining power to claim their rights to healthcare, especially in a conflict-affected relationship. Social norms and customary and statutory regulations that disadvantage women and their children must be addressed at every level-including the community and household-in order to effectively decrease barriers to HIV related care.

**Publisher** Public Library of Science

**ISSN/ISBN** 1932-6203

**edoc-URL** <http://edoc.unibas.ch/43599/>

**Full Text on edoc** Available;

**Digital Object Identifier DOI** 10.1371/journal.pone.0155510

**PubMed ID** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27280282>

**ISI-Number** 000377563000003

**Document type (ISI)** Article