

## The Effectiveness of Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Sensitivity Training for Nigerian Health Care Providers (HCPs)

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**Abstract :** Background: Health care providers (HCPs) in Nigeria receive little or no training of the healthcare needs of men who have sex with men (MSM) limiting the quality and effectiveness of comprehensive HIV prevention and treatment services. Consequently, most MSM disguise themselves to access services which limit the quality of care provided partly due to challenges related to stigma and discrimination, and breach of confidentiality. Objective: To assess the knowledge of healthcare providers on effective intervention for MSM. Methods: We trained 122 HIV focal persons drawn from 60 health facilities from twelve Nigerian states. , the participants were requested to complete a pre-training questionnaire to assess their level of working experience with key populations as a baseline. Participants included male and female doctors, nurses and counselors/testers. A test was administered to measure their knowledge on MSM sexual risk practices, HIV prevention and healthcare needs and also to assess their attitudes (including homophobia) and beliefs and how it affects service uptake by key populations particularly MSM prior and immediately after the training to ascertain the impact of the training. Results: The mean age of the HCP was 38 years +/- SD Of the 122 HCPs (45 % female, 55 % male; 85 % counsellor/testers; 15 % doctors and nurses; 92 % working in government facilities) from 42 health facilities were trained, of which 105 attempted the test questions. At the baseline, few HCPs reported any prior sensitivity training on MSM. Most of the HCPs had limited knowledge of MSM sexual health needs. Over 90% of the HCPs believed that homosexuality is a mental illness. 8 % do not consider MSM, FSW and PWID as key populations for HIV infection. 45 % lacked knowledge on MSM anal sexual practices. The post-test showed that homophobic attitudes had decreased significantly by the end of the training; the health care providers have acquired basic knowledge compared to the pre-test. Conclusions: Scaling up MSM sensitivity training for Nigerian HCPs is likely to be a timely and effective means to improve their understanding of MSM-related health issues, reduce homophobic sentiments and enhance their capacity to provide responsive HIV prevention, treatment and care services in a supportive and non-stigmatizing environment.

**Keywords :** healthcare providers, key population, men who have sex with men, HCT

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