

Pre-existing mental model

Testing HIV-positive = HIV-infected

"No one wants to have HIV"

Assumption 1

Fear of VISP

"If a vaccine makes me test HIV-positive, it means I have HIV"

Assumption 2

Anxiety about VISP

"If I test HIV-positive, I will worry that I really have HIV...even if trial staff tell me I do not have HIV"

Assumption 3

Omission bias & anticipatory regret

"I've worked hard to avoid HIV all my life by not having unprotected sex. If I contract HIV due to participating in a trial, it would be worse than getting HIV from not using a condom"

Intervention strategy

Explain and show potential volunteers PCR test examples that will be used to 'prove' that someone with VISP is not HIV-infected

Intervention strategy

Educate MSM about VISP using 'false-positive HIV antibody-based test' as an example. Explain that fragments (natural or synthetic) of HIV cannot possibly cause HIV infection

New mental model

Participating in an HIV Vaccine Trial May Cause HIV Infection

"I will be placed at risk for HIV infection by the trial vaccine"

Challenge

Even if MSM understand VISP, family members and the general public will not understand, which may lead to relationship problems with male and female partners; alienate family; and pose obstacles for overseas work visas

Intervention strategy

Engage male and female partners in trial education sessions if participant desires; skill-building for trial volunteers to discuss VISP with significant others; availability of trial ombudsperson to intervene in difficult cases

Alternative mental model

"False-positive" HIV test result
"One can test HIV-positive at the hospital/clinic, but not really be HIV-infected"