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GetCheckedOnline: Better access to testing for sexually-transmitted and blood-borne infections

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI) can compromise quality of life, sexual and reproductive health, and the health and well-being of newborns. STBBIs can also indirectly expedite sexual transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and can cause some cancers. Fortunately, many STBBIs are curable or manageable, with appropriate treatment. A key step in treatment and to help mitigate downstream transmission, is early diagnosis, and partner notification.

Many barriers can exist related to STBBI screening and treatment, including access to services and care, wait times, concerns around confidentiality, stigma, and fear of judgement or discrimination. These barriers, coupled with the increasing rates of STBBIs in the last decade, reinforce this as a public health issue globally and further emphasize the need for targeted initiatives for STBBI diagnosis and treatment.



Pictured from left to right: Garth Graham, Devon Haag, Mark Gilbert, Meghan McLennan, Susie van der Valk

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diagnosis and treatment. This low-barrier service is free and confidential, enabling increased engagement, reflected in a 2022 survey indicating that 87% of people testing through GetCheckedOnline (GCO) report that they test earlier and more often than they would if they were testing through a regular clinic or healthcare provider, with 11% reporting they would not have tested if GCO had not been available. Importantly, survey results also indicate the program is reaching equity seeking populations, with 13% of GCO testers identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit or Metis) and 14% identified as transgender. Use of GCO was also significantly higher among people of color (vs. white), gender minority (vs. men), transgender (vs. cisgender) and sexual minority (vs. heterosexual) participants. In an additional 2022 survey >50% of regular GCO users indicated a sexual identity other than heterosexual, including gay, bisexual, queer and pansexual.

“For clients looking for routine testing, GetCheckedOnline is a fantastic tool. Many clients are experienced testers and do not require the services of a physician or nurse. This frees up valuable and often scarce clinician resources

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to focus on clients with significant STI needs, such as those who are symptomatic or looking for preventative STI care such as HIV PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) initiation.” - *Natalie Holgerson, Clinical Nursing Supervisor, Provincial STBBI Clinic Clinical Prevention Services Department British Columbia Centre for Disease Control.*

For their commitment to healthcare excellence and the remarkable outcomes associated with GCO, the team behind GetCheckedOnline received 2024 Top Honors from the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence award program. Congratulations to Devon Haag, *Manager, Digital Public Health Services, BC Centre for Disease Control*, Meghan McLennan, *Manager, Laboratory Operations, BC Centre for Disease Control Public Health Laboratory*, Garth Graham, *Director, Government Contracts Management BC, LifeLabs*, Mark Gilbert, *Public Health Physician, Clinical Prevention Services, BC Centre for Disease Control*, Susie van der Valk, *Manager, Specialized Provincial & Ancillary Solutions, Provincial Health Services Authority.*