

# HIV COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES: EFFECTS ON HUSBAND HIV TESTING IN NORTHERN THAILAND

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**Abstract.** In northern Thailand, where substantial male-to-female transmission of HIV has occurred in stable partnerships, the relationships between counseling, communication, and HIV-preventive behaviors in married couples have not been well studied. In a study of HIV incidence among women in northern Thailand, each participant was advised to learn her husband's HIV-infection status and was asked to bring him for an interview at the final 12-month follow-up visit. Of the 337 men interviewed, 58% reported having ever had an HIV test. More men reported testing following their wives' enrollment: 12% in the year prior to enrollment vs 22% during the 1-year study ( $p < 0.001$ ). In the univariate analysis, men's HIV testing during the 6 months before being interviewed was associated with communication about HIV testing with their wife and extra marital sex with non-FSW while married. Testing following their wife's request was the most common reason reported. Agreement between husband's and wife's reports was poor for most issues, such as whether HIV-related communication had occurred, but agreement as to whether the husband had ever been tested for HIV was relatively high ( $\kappa = 0.62$ ). However, in the logistic regression analysis, only sex with non-FSW while married remained associated with HIV testing ( $p = 0.02$ ). The results suggest a relationship between counseling, communication, and husband HIV testing. Better communication by couples may result in more effective use of HIV testing, which is already prevalent in this population, to prevent HIV transmission.

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