

## Quality Action CASE STUDY

### 1. Name and country of the organisation

*(Please state the name and the country of the organisation that implemented this practical application of a QA/QI tool as part of Quality Action. We do not publish this information unless you agree. You can remain anonymous by adjusting the settings at the end of this form).*

ARAS - The Romanian Association Against AIDS

### 2. Authors of the case study and contact details

*(Please provide then name of the author(s) of this case study and any contact names, Email address or websites where readers can access more information about this practical application of a QA/QI tool).*

Monica Dan - ARAS M&E department

### 3. External support (facilitators/partners/technical assistance)

*(Please list the names of other organisations and/or people who were involved in this practical application of a QA/QI tool, e.g. project partners, technical assistance, external stakeholders etc..).*

Members of the MSM community actually/previously involved as facilitators in AIDS prevention/sexual health activities addressing MSM

### 4. Project/Programme and key population/target group addressed

*(Please describe the project/programme to which you applied the tool and the key population/target group addressed).*

The evaluation was focused on a project targeting MSM. The project mission is to provide AIDS prevention (including HIV pre/post test) and sexual health services to MSM in Bucharest. The HIV prevalence among MSM in Romania increased in the last five years, and little was done in order to understand and improve their access to AIDS prevention and other medical and psychological services.

Two categories of interventions/services were planned within the overall project (part of two different interventions):

- to organise and provide appropriate health (including sexual health ) services for MSM within the ARAS Health Center (dermato-venerology, general practice medicine, infectious diseases services, psychological counseling and therapy, psychiatry, kineto-therapy, physiotherapy);
- to contribute to the improvement of the HIV testing and counseling procedures - gay relevant - provided by other public and private HIV testing sites in Bucharest; the intervention was planned to include an assessment of the HIV testing and counselling service provision with regards to the appropriateness for the MSM clients and a training session and materials for the specialists who work in HIV testing and counseling services on MSM relevant aspects of the pre/post HIV test counseling.

## 5. Goals/aims of applying the QA/QI tool

*(Please list the goals you wanted to achieve with the practical application of the tool).*

The focus groups aimed to collect opinions of MSM about:

- their access to medical and psychological services and their needs and wishes in connection with those kind of services.
  - their experiences with HIV testing and counselling at private and public testing sites in order to plan a formative intervention targeting the personnel of the service delivery points
  - the most adequate and efficient methods of services marketing within the MSM community
- in order to adapt AIDS prevention services provision (including pre/post test counselling and health services) to the needs of MSM.

## 6. Tool and methodology used

*(Please indicate which of the five tools you used (Succeed, QIP, PQD, PIQA, Schiff) and briefly sketch out the steps and measures of how you applied it).*

PQD: focus group

Four focus groups were organised at the ARAS Health Clinic, facilitated by members of the MSM community previously involved in health promotion activities among the MSM community.

The participants were members of the MSM community who are or were involved/exposed to AIDS prevention activities as well as persons who were recruited among peers directly or using MSM-specific social media.

The focus group guide included:

- the types of services of interest for MSM and service provision details (organisation, program, personnel training):
  - HIV testing and pre/post test counseling
  - health services of interest to MSM community members (dermatovenerology, nutrition/diabetes, stomatology)
  - support groups, psychotherapy and counselling - themes of interest (e.g. coming out) and methods (couple psychotherapy)
- service marketing and campaigns
- free of charge services, paid services and promotional packages
- collaboration with other services in service provision and referrals

## 7. Results and benefits of applying the QA/QI tool

*(Please describe what resulted from applying the tool and if and how your project/programme benefitted).*

The focus groups allowed the organisation to understand the needs of MSM in terms of accessing medical and psychological services, including pre post HIV test counselling.

The participants described a range of opinions and experiences they had with the medical services. Some of them revealed the fact that doctors are not used to explore the whole range of risks which may be relevant for MSM and the diagnostics as well as the treatment may not be well-targeted. Also, the communication with doctors is often affected by prejudices which does not allow for an open discussion.

The participants revealed the fact that the promotion of HIV testing and counselling may be perceived as pressure and made specific recommendations on the counselling procedures (HIV counselling as well as the counselling related to other medical specialties). The general opinion was that HIV testing would be more interesting if offered in a wider range of services adapted to MSM needs.

Some topics of interest were suggested for group therapy sessions, couple psychotherapy and marketing services to the MSM community.

## 8. Recommendations

*(Please describe the lessons learnt from positive and negative experiences during the process of using the tool itself and about the quality of projects/programmes like yours).*

The medical personnel need to be trained in order to explore all the various aspects relevant to MSM (risks, symptomatology, etc) in order to correctly diagnose and treat patients. The training should also include communication topics in order to facilitate a more open discussion between the doctor and the patient.

AIDS prevention and HIV testing and counselling must be offered within a more diverse range of services (various medical specialties, individual and group psychotherapy), as the permanent promotion of HIV testing and counseling only became to be seen as being boring.

Service marketing should consider the communication aspects (focused on the topics presented by the participants) as well as organisational aspects such as providing vouchers and promotional packages of services.

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