



Contribution ID: 315

Type: **Poster presentation**

Learning from COVID-19: Implementation Perspectives from Users and Rejectors of SARS-CoV-2 Mail-in Tests to Inform Future Testing Strategies

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 5:44 PM (1 minute)

Despite the important role of testing as a measure against the COVID-19 pandemic, user perspectives on SARS-CoV-2 tests remain scarce, inhibiting an improvement of testing approaches and pandemic preparedness. Conducted amid the second pandemic wave (late 2020 –early 2021) during a multi-arm trial evaluating SARS-CoV-2 surveillance strategies in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, this qualitative sub-study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how test users and rejectors perceived mail-in SARS-CoV-2 gargle tests. We conducted 67 semi-structured in-depth interviews via telephone or video call. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed inductively using thematic analysis. Respondents generally described gargle sampling as simple and comfortable. However, individual perceptions of the testing method and its feasibility varied widely. Self-sampling was appreciated for lowering infection risks during testing but also considered more complex. Gargle-sampling increased participants' self-efficacy. Communication and trust decisively influenced the intervention's acceptability. User-driven insights on how to streamline testing include: consider communication, first impressions of tests and information as key for successful mail-in testing; pay attention to the role of mutual trust between those taking and administering tests; implement gargle self-sampling as a pleasant alternative to swab testing; offer multiple test methods to increase test up-take.

Keywords

pandemic preparedness, infectious diseases, COVID-19, test decision, self-sample, gargle

Registration ID

OHS25-159

Professional Status of the Speaker

Graduate Student

Junior Scientist Status

Yes, I am a Junior Scientist.

Author: RÖHR, Freda (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany)

Co-authors: UELLNER, Ferdinand (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); ANDERS, Simon (Center for Molecular Biology Heidelberg (ZMBH), University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany; Bioquant Center, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany); DECKERT, Andreas (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); BURK, Robin (Center for Molecular Biology Heidelberg (ZMBH), University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany); KNOP, Michael (Center for Molecular Biology Heidelberg (ZMBH), University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany; German Cancer Research Center

(DKFZ)-ZMBH Alliance, Heidelberg, Germany); BRUGNARA, Lucia (Evaplan Ltd. at the University Hospital Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany); BÄRNIGHAUSEN, Till (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); JAHN, Albrecht (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); MCMAHON, Shannon (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); International Health Department, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, USA); SOUARES, Aurélia (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany); German Center for Infection Research Heidelberg Site, Heidelberg, Germany)

Presenter: RÖHR, Freda (Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany)

Session Classification: Coffee & Poster Viewing II

Track Classification: Pandemic Preparedness & Prevention