

- Interpreting Ring Residual Drug Level Scores
- Introducing the COACH Study!

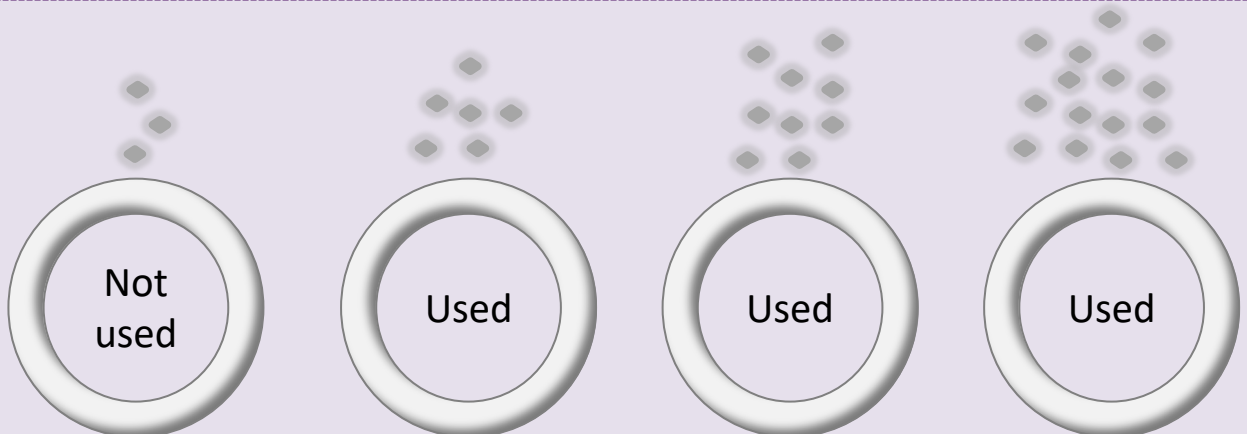
Interpreting Ring Residual Drug Level Scores

During the MTN Annual Meeting in March, Elizabeth Brown from SCHARP reviewed important information on the accuracy of residual drug level scores during the HOPE team meeting. As you know, when reporting ring residual drug level scores to participants, when possible we should emphasize the average quarterly ring drug levels, as this may be a more accurate representation of ring use than each individual ring drug level. When we tell participants that the results are not 100% accurate, this is because several things that affect the drug level can vary, including:

- 1) the level of drug that the ring contained before use
- 2) the level of drug that is released over a 4-week period
- 3) the testing procedure to determine the level of drug left in the ring

While we can be quite certain that a 0 indicates that a ring was not used, the levels of 1, 2, and 3 can vary based on baseline level of drug in ring, the level of drug that is released during use, and the testing procedure itself, in addition to the participant's use of the ring during the 4-week period. **Therefore, it is not uncommon for a person to use the ring consistently and still receive a result of a 1 or a 2.**

While this is very important to keep in mind during the counselling sessions, it does not change what we say to participants. We will continue to remind participants that the results may not be 100% accurate, recommend that they wait for results from other rings before deciding whether or not to continue ring use, and reinforce that if they have used the ring during the entire month their risk of HIV infection is low.



Introducing the COACH Study!

The COACH Study is a new study that is part of HOPE that focuses on YOU, the study counsellors.

The HOPE COACH team has set a new standard for how to implement a new counselling intervention in an HIV biomedical prevention study. As you know, never before had counselling sessions been consistently recorded, reviewed, and used to provide feedback to counsellors in order assist and support the counselling team. Through the ratings we have also learned a lot about how counsellors learn new interventions and how consistently they deliver that intervention throughout the course of a study.

The COACH Study is about learning from everyone's experience, meaning we want to hear from those of you who loved Options counselling and those who did not like it at all. **THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO LET US KNOW HOW YOU REALLY FEEL ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF THE COUNSELLING, AND HOW YOU THINK WE COULD MAKE IT BETTER!**

Our goal is to help design better interventions for future researchers and counsellors. However, please note that this study is voluntary and it is your decision whether or not to take part. If you do decide to participate, all of your input will be kept strictly confidential.

We have received MTN approval for the study and will soon submit materials for IRB approval. We will let you know once we receive all the approvals and are ready to begin the study!

