



CDC Urges HIV Tests for Everyone 13-64

By GayWebMonkey.com

Atlanta, GA - An HIV test should be almost as common as a cholesterol check, say federal health officials, who Thursday recommended routine testing for the AIDS virus for most Americans.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said people between the ages of 13 and 64 should be tested for the virus when they get other routine medical tests.

According to The CDC's media announcement issued Thursday, the recommendations aim to simplify the HIV testing process in health care settings and increase early HIV diagnosis among the estimated more than 250,000 HIV-positive Americans who are unaware of their infection.

The guidelines could help end the stigma of HIV testing, prevent further spread of the disease, and lead to needed care for an estimated 250,000 Americans who don't yet know they have it, CDC officials said.

"We urgently need new approaches to reach the quarter-million Americans with HIV who do not realize they are infected," said Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, CDC director, in a media release. "People with HIV have a right to know that they are infected so they can seek treatment and take steps to protect themselves and their partners."

Nearly half of new HIV infections are discovered when doctors are trying to diagnose a patient who has already grown sick with an HIV-related illness, CDC officials said.

"By identifying people earlier through a screening program, we'll allow them to access life-extending therapy, and also through prevention services, learn how to avoid transmitting HIV infection to others," Dr. Timothy Mastro, acting director of the CDC's division of HIV/AIDS prevention, told the Associated Press.

But some groups are concerned that the CDC's recommendations could violate America's civil rights.

In a response to the CDC's announcement, the American Civil Liberties Union released a statement saying that the new recommendations may harm the health of those newly diagnosed with HIV and compromise the civil rights of anyone seeking medical treatment.

"The CDC should be commended for trying to increase the number of people tested for HIV, but eliminating the only safeguards that guarantee that testing is voluntary and informed does little to ensure that people will receive the care they need," said Rose Saxe, a staff attorney with the ACLU AIDS Project, in a press statement. "Studies have shown that patients who are tested without consent are less likely to get the follow-up care that is critical to maintaining good health."

Under the new guidelines, patients would be tested for the AIDS virus as part of the standard tests they get when they go for urgent or emergency care, or even during a routine physical.

The CDC recommends everyone get tested at least once, but annual testing is urged only for people at high risk.

The AP reports that the recommendation, if fully implemented, could mean testing for to 100 to 200 million Americans, said Ron Spair, chief financial officer of Pennsylvania-based OraSure Technologies, one of three companies that sell rapid-result HIV tests in the United States.

The CDC has been working on the guidelines for about three years, and got input from more than 100 groups, including doctors' associations and HIV patient support groups.

Written By Troy Espera