

IU expert: Current HIV testing approach 'not doing the job'

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Beth Meyerson, co-chair of the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention at Indiana University, said expanding HIV testing is critical.

"Forty percent of the people who live with HIV do not learn about their status until they are within a year of an AIDS diagnosis," said Meyerson, assistant professor of [health policy](#) and management in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at IU Bloomington. "We also know that 20 percent of the people with HIV do not currently know it. This means that our current system of testing is not doing the job."

Meyerson is leading a research team that includes the School of HPER, The Kinsey Institute and Butler College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences to see whether HIV testing can be expanded in Indiana pharmacies.

"The evolution of HIV diagnostics paired with the changing role of pharmacies and pharmacists creates a wonderful opportunity to explore HIV testing in pharmacies and through pharmacies," she said. "We anticipate the availability of over-the-counter rapid HIV tests as well, and these all require a pharmacy environment that is ready for such health access opportunities."

The CDC is conducting a [pilot study](#) of [pharmacy](#) testing, using the free rapid [HIV tests](#). In Indiana, which is not included in the pilot, HIV testing can be conducted at HIV testing sites, by private providers and with over-the-counter home kits that require a [blood sample](#) and a two-

week wait for results. These home kits can cost about \$80.

Meyerson said rural communities are particularly affected by the lack of [preventive services](#).

"They lack adequate public health infrastructure, and the infrastructure they do have tends to stigmatize HIV testing and the populations who come for testing," she said.

"The CDC study is a great opportunity to see how pharmacies in high-HIV-incidence communities can ride the HIV testing bike," Meyerson said. "Our study is Indiana-based and asks pharmacists and community members whether they accept pharmacy-based HIV testing, whether it is feasible and whether we are ready to move forward. This is important in a state with moderate HIV incidence and will help us design a testing system with policy supports."

Provided by Indiana University

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