

HIV testing to become routine in innovative Coventry GP pilot

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HIV testing in Coventry (UK) is to become a routine part of registering with a GP at ten surgeries across the city, which has the highest prevalence of the condition in the West Midlands.

All patients registering with the pilot surgeries will be offered a simple finger prick blood test, with results available in less than a minute.

The initiative, aimed at improving the early detection of the condition, is being led by a partnership involving Birmingham City University, the Integrated Sexual Health Service (Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust), Travel Klinix and Coventry City Council's Public Health Team.

More than three in every 1,000 people aged 15-59 years old in Coventry are diagnosed with HIV, while estimates for the UK suggest that over a quarter of people with the condition remain undiagnosed.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recommended that all areas with an HIV prevalence of over two per 1,000 population should increase access to HIV testing. One of those recommendations relates to increasing the number of HIV tests undertaken in primary care, as primary care professionals are in an ideal position to support the drive for early diagnosis of HIV.

The effectiveness of the pilot will be evaluated by researchers at Birmingham City University, who will explore the potential to expand the model more widely.

Dr Satyajit Das, Sexual Health Consultant at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, said: "Quite simply, HIV is not the illness it used to be. For thousands of people who have been given a positive diagnosis, HIV is now similar in many ways to other long-term conditions such as high blood pressure, but it is crucial that people come forward for testing. Medication is now very effective and most people don't realise that treatment can involve taking just one pill per day."

"Despite this we know that over half of all newly diagnosed patients in

Coventry between 2011 and 2013 were diagnosed late, at a point at which they were much more likely to suffer severe complications or even, sadly, to die from the condition."

"The evidence is clear that [early diagnosis](#) has long-term health benefits, and also reduces transmission of HIV."

Professor Alex Kendall, Associate Dean of Research and Enterprise at Birmingham City University, said: "There are two key motivations behind this exciting initiative aimed at treating a condition that we know now is very effectively treatable. Firstly, we need to understand how effective offering this simple test is in reducing late diagnoses of HIV and secondly, we need to understand what people and health professionals think about offering testing in this way, in order to make sure we are offering the test in the right way."

Councillor Kamran Caan of Coventry City Council, added: "This is an exciting opportunity that we are seizing here in Coventry, not only to increase access to testing, but to change the way that HIV is perceived and challenge the myths and stigma that surround this illness. It is only this way that we will be able to successfully tackle the problem of people being diagnosed with HIV at a late stage and reduce the risk of the infection being passed on."

People who are worried that they may have HIV should contact the Integrated Sexual Health Service on 0300 020 0027 to discuss how to get tested.

More information: If you want to know more about getting an HIV test, please see: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/HIV/Pages/Diagnosispg.aspx

Provided by Birmingham City University

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