

Innovative HIV self-testing study empowers young women in rural South Africa

November 30 2016

A Public Health research unit at Wits University is leading a study that enables young women in rural South Africa to test themselves for HIV.

The study forms part of a World AIDS Day programme presented by the Faculty of Health Sciences at Wits on Thursday 1 December from 13:00.

The MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt), in partnership with the University of North Carolina and the University of California, San Francisco, has launched a study into a new method of HIV testing that can be performed by individuals themselves.

This self-testing study takes place in Agincourt, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga. The rationale is to investigate if improvements in HIV prevention and its linkage to care can be achieved through a more accessible HIV testing method – particularly in rural communities.

Zola Myakayaka, study project manager, says: "A major challenge in the fight against HIV/AIDS has been late diagnosis. Patients often present with an already critically low CD4 count when they arrive for HIV testing at clinics. This results in a longer, more difficult treatment process. Early diagnosis would allow them to be placed onto immediate Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART), significantly reducing the risk of opportunistic infections and allowing for a relatively quick recovery to normal CD4 levels."

This study will explore self-testing as an [early diagnosis](#) method. People are often reluctant [test](#) at clinics due to queues and stigma. Self-testing, which involves a simple saliva test (in this particular study), or a blood test by finger prick, can be performed at home. This bypasses the clinic setting and may reduce the time between contracting HIV and initiating treatment.

Women aged 18-24-years will participate in the study and extend the self-test to their friends and partners. Participants will be randomised into a group who test at a clinic and a group who can choose between clinic and self-testing. The study will determine whether [young women](#), given the choice to self-test, will do so at a greater rate than those offered only clinic testing. The study will also determine if integrating people from participants' social-sexual network will increase testing uptake, thereby increasing detection of previously undiagnosed infections.

Provided by Wits University

Citation: Innovative HIV self-testing study empowers young women in rural South Africa (2016, November 30) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-11-hiv-self-testing-empowers-young-women.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.