Antibody Snatcher

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Nuke HIV testing? The CDC is exploring cost-effective methods of early detection with Nucleic Acid Amplification Testing (NAAT)—which could revolutionize current HIV testing. By searching for the virus itself instead of antibodies, NAAT narrows the window between infection and detectability from three months to as little as 10 days—which is also when the newly infected are most infectious. However, NAAT has a 2% to 9% chance of false results, so “antibody testing is still necessary” to confirm any result, says the CDC’s Bernard Branson. Even pooling blood samples for NAAT costs twice that of antibody tests, so don’t expect a national rollout anytime soon.

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