Natal Attraction

July 1, 2003 By Laura Whitehorn

Addressing the estimated 25 percent of U.S. HIVers who don’t know they’re positive, the CDC is pushing HIV testing as a routine check-up, especially during pregnancy. The plan, “New Strategies for a Changing Epidemic,” makes four recommendations: voluntarily testing all mothers-to-be (or the newborns of those who refuse); urging docs to offer HIV tests during regular health screenings; using OraQuick tests for super-fast results; and improving partner notification. The directives aren’t mandatory, but some activists fear they could lead to coercive testing of, say, marginalized women and prisoners. What’s more, they argue, quick-test kits will undermine pre- and post-test counseling. The CDC said that it wants only to reach more people with HIV and help those in the dark about their status to get treatment and other services.

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