DC Health Officials Push for Opt-Out Routine HIV Testing

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In response to the disproportionately high rate of HIV in Washington, DC—where at least 3 percent of the overall population is HIV positive—the district's HIV/AIDS Administration is urging health care providers to make HIV testing a routine part of a doctor's visit, *The Washington Examiner* reports.

Under the opt-out policy, patients would be tested automatically unless they refuse. The city is also asking the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for $4 million to fund a safe-sex and testing awareness campaign.

"Opt-out normalizes and destigmatizes HIV testing," said Shannon Hader, MD, director of the HIV/AIDS Administration. Hader added that 70 percent of people newly diagnosed with HIV in DC have been to a medical provider within the past year without being offered a test.

According to the article, Hader said she had hoped health care providers would adopt this policy voluntarily, but David Catania, chair of the DC City Council's Committee on Health, said he would require opt-out testing by law if necessary.

Catania added that the city is also bolstering condom availability to prevent new HIV infections. Some CVS drug stores in the capital keep condoms behind locked cases to deter shoplifters—which also dissuades people from purchasing them—so the city is requiring that all of its CVS stores display them out in the open by September 6.

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