South Africa’s Plan for Mandatory HIV Testing Raises Human Rights Concerns

September 21, 2009

Human rights advocates argue that making HIV testing mandatory in South Africa would breach patients’ human rights, the Daily Mail reports. Officials had proposed that everyone be tested for HIV automatically during a routine doctor’s visit.

According to the article, Western Cape health minister Theuns Botha said mandatory testing would be a “major onslaught” on AIDS in South Africa, which has the largest number of people living with HIV in the world. However, South Africa’s human rights commission said that forcing patients to take the test would be illegal because it violates their right to privacy.

Other experts are afraid the plan will cause people to avoid going to the doctor altogether. “In spite of our attempts to normalize HIV/AIDS, it is a terrifying disease,” said Mark Heywood, a spokesman for AIDS Law Project, a human rights group that advocates on behalf of HIV-positive people in South Africa and around the world. “With HIV testing, there has to be informed consent. People have to understand what they are being tested for and then give permission. It implies a level of counseling, whether it is for two minutes or even half an hour.”

Up to 6 million people are HIV positive in South Africa, which is about 17 percent of the population. However, only 63,000 of them have access to antiretroviral treatment.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/sa-mandatory-hiv-testing-17293-8341