San Francisco Aims to Diagnose HIV Sooner

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San Francisco is launching a cutting-edge program this month designed to diagnose new HIV infections shortly after they occur, when the risk of transmission is highest, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports. For the past decade, about 800 to 1,000 new infections have occurred annually in San Francisco. The goal of the two-year project is to reduce by half the number of new HIV cases.

Expanded testing paired with counseling will take place at Magnet, a community health center in the Castro, for men who have sex with men (MSM). Clients engaging in recent, high-risk behavior will be invited to take viral RNA (ribonucleic acid) testing, to identify those who are acutely infected. They will also be encouraged to inform their partners.

According to the article, the project also hopes to reach a segment of society that has been difficult to contact: black MSM ages 13 to 29. The rate of new infections among that group is about twice that of white or Latino men in the same age bracket, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rick Edwards underwent the special testing and counseling last month before the program was officially launched. He was HIV negative. “It’s vitally important to stop the virus from being transmitted,” Edwards said. “The test takes away the pins and needles of being concerned.”

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