Study: Universal HIV Testing Would Greatly Reduce Transmission

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Universal HIV testing coupled with immediate treatment for those who test positive would almost completely eradicate transmission of the virus within a decade, according to a new study and reported on by Reuters.

“Although other prevention strategies, alone or in combination, could substantially reduce HIV incidence, our model suggests that only universal voluntary HIV testing and immediate initiation of antiretroviral drugs could reduce transmission to the point at which elimination might be feasible by 2020 for a generalized epidemic, such as that in South Africa,” researchers wrote.

The study used a computer model based on data from South Africa; in this model, all HIV transmission occurred through heterosexual sex. Results showed that voluntary testing, in which at least 90 percent of the population took part, along with immediate antiretroviral treatment for those who test positive could reduce transmission by more than 95 percent within 10 years.

Geoffrey Garnett, a researcher at Imperial College London wrote: “At its best, the strategy would prevent morbidity and mortality for the population, both through better treatment of the individual and reduced spread of HIV.”

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