

THE CENTRALITY OF COMMUNITIES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF HIV SELF-TESTING IN AUSTRALIA

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Background/Approach: The seventh National HIV Strategy sets an ambitious target of virtually eliminating HIV transmission in Australia by 2020. Frequent, easy testing, and early diagnosis, is critical if the target is to be achieved. HIV self-testing is identified in the National HIV Strategy as a tool that can simplify the testing process and address access and acceptability issues such as cost, time and convenience.

Analysis/Argument: HIV self-testing is approved for use and sold in a number of comparable countries including, the United States, the United Kingdom and France (and into other parts of Europe). The experiences in these countries can help inform the potential model of distribution in Australia. There is also now research-evidence of the demand for and acceptability of HIV self-testing among gay men and bisexual men in Australia, and the positive impact of these technologies on the testing levels and frequency among these men.

Outcome/Results: Self-testing should be targeted to populations with a higher prevalence of HIV. HIV self-test devices should be investigated for their effectiveness and acceptability among the communities self-testing is targeted at. As with all HIV testing in Australia, self-testing should only occur in circumstances where the individual consents to its use.

Conclusions/Applications: The communities that form the priority populations for HIV need to be central to informing how HIV self-testing is targeted and distributed for appropriate use, including for the education for these communities.

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