

‘Time to Test’ Press Release ahead of World AIDS day on behalf of; the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), the British HIV Association (BHIVA), the Health Protection Agency, the Children's HIV Association (CHIVA), the Department of Health (DH), the HIV Pharmacy Association (HIVPA), the National HIV Nurses’ Association (NHIVNA), and the Royal College of Physicians.

Public supports increased testing in fight against undiagnosed HIV

New studies reported at the ‘Time to Test’ joint conference in London have today (World AIDS Day) demonstrated that HIV testing is cost-effective and acceptable amongst patients across a variety of healthcare settings. But there are concerns that over half of HIV diagnoses are routinely being made late because Health Care Professionals have preconceived ideas about their patients.

Professor Richard Thompson, President of the Royal College of Physicians told the conference:

“Early diagnosis is one of the most important steps that can be taken to secure good outcomes for patients with HIV. As patterns of transmission change and the number of local areas with a high prevalence of HIV continues to remain high, clinical teams and commissioners need to be more proactive in their efforts to get patients into treatment early. The evidence for weaving test protocols into the admissions pathway is persuasive. However the barriers to better diagnosis rates are cultural as well as systemic. Clinicians must banish their preconceptions about what an HIV patient necessarily looks like and should seek to offer tests in all cases where the symptoms could indicate infection.”

The conference is a culmination of a series of Department of Health-sponsored HIV testing pilot projects. These increase the evidence base for routine HIV testing in areas with a high prevalence of HIV.

Commenting on the findings of pilot projects funded by the Department of Health, Public Health Minister Anne Milton said:

“I’m very pleased to see that the findings from these projects show that offering an HIV test in GP practices, hospital and community settings, works well for patients. The pilots picked up 50 people, in high prevalence areas, who were previously undiagnosed. Earlier diagnosis means people can start treatment as soon as possible and live a near normal life. It also helps prevent spreading the virus. So it’s good news that people are happy to be tested and we can pick up cases of HIV that could otherwise be missed or found much later. The findings from today’s important conference will help us in our work to improve the public’s health.”

Some of the key findings from the studies included:

- A six month study of acute general medical admissions found that only one quarter of undiagnosed HIV positive patients were correctly targeted and diagnosed by clinicians for testing.

Implementation of the routine offer of an HIV test for all admissions would have identified the remaining three quarters which were correspondingly missed¹

- 95% of respondents attending an emergency department considered the offer of a routine HIV test acceptable²
- 96.7% of newly registering patients at a GP practice agreed that the offer of an HIV test was a good idea³.

The findings follow data released last week by the Health Protection Agency showed of the 6,630 new HIV diagnoses made last year alone, over half (52%) of these were diagnosed late, i.e. after HIV drug treatment should have started. There are now an estimated 86,500 people living with HIV, approximately a quarter of whom are unaware of their infection⁴, and almost a quarter of Primary Care Trust areas are now defined as high prevalence with more than two diagnosed cases of HIV per thousand.

Dr Keith Radcliffe, President of BASHH said:

“The findings from these projects are of enormous importance: The life-time cost of each new HIV infection in the UK is between £280,000-£360,000, so the public health benefits of routine HIV testing are clear for all to see. It is vital that all clinicians working in high prevalence areas – and those elsewhere who see patients with atypical symptoms – take heed of these results and recognise that it is ‘Time to Test’.”

‘Time to Test’ is a joint conference of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), the British HIV Association (BHIVA), the Department of Health, the Health Protection Agency, the Royal College of Physicians, the Children's HIV Association (CHIVA), the HIV Pharmacy Association (HIVPA) and the National HIV Nurses’ Association (NHIVNA).

The ‘Time to Test’ conference also paves way for the launch of the ‘Halve It’ campaign’. Welcoming the launch, Dr Ian Williams, Chair of BHIVA, and the Time to Test Conference Steering Committee commented:

“The later people are diagnosed with HIV, the more difficult and expensive it is to treat them, the poorer their outcome may be, and the more likely they are to have transmitted the infection – so we’re delighted that the Time to Test conference is hosting the launch of the ‘Halve It’ campaign today. This is a coalition of national professional organizations and experts in HIV, aiming to halve both the proportion of late diagnosis and people living with undiagnosed HIV, within 5 years”, he said.

- Ends –

PRESS CONTACT DETAILS:

For further information, or to arrange an interview with one of the authors of the study, or a specialist in HIV treatment, please contact Harriet Smith, on behalf of Time to Test, at Munro and Forster, harriet.smith@munroforster.com or 020 7815 3900

Notes to editors

1. N Perry, L Heald, J Cassell, M Hankins, S Barden, M Cubbon, J Quin, D Richardson, and M Fisher, "HIV testing in acute general medical admissions must be universally offered to reduce undiagnosed HIV" Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust and Medical School, Brighton, UK
2. M Rayment, A Thornton, S Gidwani, C Rae, K Phekoo, J Holland, M Atkins, A Nardone, D Asboe, M Tenant-Flowers, J Anderson, P Roberts, and A Sullivan "HIV testing in the emergency department – reporting one arm of the HIV testing in Non-Traditional Settings (HINTS) study" Chelsea and Westminster Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Health Protection Agency, NIHR CLAHRC, North West London, Feedback South London, Kings College Hospitals Foundation Trust, London, Centre for the Study of Sexual Health and HIV, Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London UK (April 2010)
3. Bryce G, Jeffrey A, Hankins M, Nicholson S, Jackson D, Wilkinson P, "A study to assess the acceptability, feasibility and cost-effectiveness of universal HIV testing with newly registering patients (aged 16 – 59) in Primary Care" NHS Brighton and Hove, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, University of Surrey.
4. Health Protection Agency (HPA) "HIV in the United Kingdom: 2010" (November 2010)
Report available at:
http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1287145264558
5. National guidelines for HIV testing, jointly produced by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), the British HIV Association (BHIVA) and the British Infection Association (BIA) were launched in 2008 and published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine on the 1st October 2009. A copy of the guidelines can be downloaded at the BASHH website: www.bashh.org/guidelines

Adapted from UK national guidelines on HIV testing.

	CONDITIONS WHERE HIV TESTING SHOULD BE ROUTINELY OFFERED TO ALL	CONDITIONS WHERE HIV TESTING SHOULD BE ROUTINELY OFFERED TO THOSE AGE 15-65Y And STILL CONSIDER IF 65-80
Respiratory	TB, bilateral infiltrates or part of atypical pneumonia screen to exclude Pneumocystis	Any pneumonia Any cough with raised RR despite normal CXR (exclude Pneumocystis)
Neurology	Cerebral toxoplasmosis, Primary cerebral lymphoma, Cryptococcal meningitis, prior to brain biopsy	Any meningitis/encephalitis, Any mass lesion, GBS, Transverse myelitis, Peripheral neuropathy, Memory change
Dermatology	Kaposi's Sarcoma	Seborrhoeic dermatitis, Psoriasis, Herpes zoster, Facial molluscum, Dry skin with other indicators. Any macular/papular rash ?seroconversion
Gastroenterology	Hepatitis B or C Oesophageal candida	Oral candidiasis, Oral hairy leukoplakia, Diarrhoea ? Inflammatory bowel disease, Weight loss when coeliac considered, Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidia with other indicators. When doing Full liver screen
Oncology Rheumatology	Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma	Hodgkins, when diagnosing ANCA associated disease, SLE, or connective tissue disease esp RF seronegative

Haematology	As part of routine work up of raised ESR lymphadenopathy, anaemia, thrombocytopenia, neutropenia, lymphopenia	
Ophthalmology	All Infective retinal diseases including herpesviruses	Unexplained retinopathy Uveitis workup
Other	When renal biopsy performed	Lymphoepithelial parotid cysts. Oral ulcers or allergic reactions requiring steroids with other indicators, proteinuria

6. The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) is the lead professional representative body for those managing STIs and HIV in the UK. It seeks to innovate and deliver excellent tailored education and training to healthcare professionals, trainers and trainees in the UK and to determine, monitor and maintain standards of governance in the provision of sexual health and HIV care. www.bashh.org
7. The British HIV Association (BHIVA) is the leading UK professional association representing professionals in HIV care. It acts as a national advisory body to professions and other organisations advising on all aspects of HIV care. www.bhiva.org
8. The British Infection Association is the specialist society for Infectious Disease physicians. <http://www.britishinfection.org/drupal/>
9. The Royal College of Physicians is a professional body, representing over 25,000 physicians, that aims to improve the quality of patient care by continually raising medical standards. <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/Pages/index.aspx>
10. Children's HIV Association of the UK and Ireland (CHIVA) is an association of professionals who are committed to providing excellence in the care of children infected or affected by HIV and their families. There are over 150 members, embracing many different disciplines including nursing, GU Medicine, paediatrics, community child health, child development, psychology, social work, dieticians, pharmacists and support services <http://www.chiva.org.uk/>
11. HIV Pharmacy Association (HIVPA) is open to all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in the UK and Republic of Ireland working in Infectious Diseases and HIV specialties and accepts applications from overseas HIV pharmacists as Associate members upon request. HIVPA offers education and networking for its members to improve personal and professional development, for the benefit of the patient and the individual. <http://www.hivpa.org/>
12. National HIV Nurse's Association (NHIVNA) provides an academic and educational forum for the dissemination of original nursing research in the field of HIV/AIDS. We also aim to address the communication and support needs of nurses working in this area. We hope that these activities will assist in the promotion of good practice in the care of people with HIV.
13. The Time to Test conference is being held on World AIDS day at the Royal College of Physicians. Undiagnosed and late diagnosis of HIV remains a concern in the UK and expanding testing will result in earlier diagnosis with benefits for the individual as well as the population. This conference aims to review the evidence in order to inform best practice to address this problem. This is a very important and urgent issue and that the time is right to discuss what effective action can be taken at a local and national level to help reduce the unnecessary and avoidable morbidity and mortality amongst undiagnosed HIV-positive people. It is believed that the number of undiagnosed HIV-positive people living in the UK can be reduced rapidly by the dissemination of best practice.
14. The conference is intended to bring together relevant groups and stakeholders to understand the extent of the problem, and to present the results from projects funded by the Department of Health to underpin the new BHIVA/BASHH/BIS guidelines on HIV testing. In addition, the

conference will include poster presentations for review and specific time dedicated to open discussion in order to define best practice across the sectors and make recommendations.

15. For more information about the 'Halve It' campaign please contact Rob Walton at: Rob@wisper-public-affairs.com