



MEDIA RELEASE

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Research shows need to change HIV testing

HIV testing in Victoria should be changed to a single visit to encourage those gay men who were avoiding the test, according to research by Deakin University.

The research found that gay men who had unprotected sex were not getting tested for HIV because they feared the result; did not have any HIV-related symptoms; and felt there was no urgency to do so.

Ron Gold, an Associate Professor with Deakin's School of Psychology, said it was important to improve the number of gay men being tested for HIV because early detection led to a better prognosis.

Also, an estimated one-third of new infections were due to transmission from gay men with undiagnosed HIV.

"Extensive testing for HIV is an important means of limiting the epidemic," Associate Professor Gold said.

Gay men currently have to return to a clinic a week or a fortnight later to receive the result of a HIV test.

"A single visit to a clinic would encourage more testing by lessening the inconvenience involved and, more importantly, reducing the stress of waiting for a result," Associate Professor Gold said.

The research involved a survey of 97 gay men at three Melbourne gay bars who had not been tested for HIV for at least four years, including 69 who had never been tested.

Associate Professor Gold said the results had important implications for health educators.

"Public health campaigns need to focus more on the treatment benefits of early detection," he said.

"Campaigns should also focus on 'anticipated regret' – getting gay men to focus on a time in the future when they might not be able to reap the full benefits that early treatment may have offered."

Ends

Associate Professor Ron Gold is available for interview and can be contacted on (03) 9244 647, email ron.gold@deakin.edu.au