



California Drug Counseling

Government Mulls Do-It-Yourself AIDS Test

Swab the inside of your mouth. Put that swab into a vial of test fluid, and 20 minutes later you'll learn whether you're infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

The OraQuick Advance test is already widely available in health clinics and doctors' offices. The Food and Drug Administration is considering permitting it to be sold over the counter.

Supporters of home kits say they will spur more people to get tested and get treatment sooner if infected. However, concerns have been raised about whether a doctor or counselor should be nearby when people find out they are HIV-positive.

If approved, the test would become the first FDA-approved test that a person can take without the presence of a health care worker, or the requirement of mailing a sample to a lab.

The maker, OraSure Technology of Beth-

lehem, Pa., has not decided how much it will charge consumers for the kit, said Ron Spair, the company's chief financial officer. The company sells the kits for between \$12 and \$17 to clinics and doctors, he said.

The test is accurate more than 99 percent of the time, Spair said. Still, a positive result from the test should be confirmed through an additional test by doctors or public health officials, he said.

To take the test, a person swabs the inside of his mouth, between his cheek and gum, picking up not saliva but cells lining the mouth. The user then inserts the swab into a vial of fluid that comes with the kit. Twenty minutes later, an indicator will light up if the test detects the presence of HIV-1 or HIV-2 antibodies.

Those antibodies become present in the body several weeks after a person ac-

Continued on page 2, see AIDS Test

Study: 1 in 5 have Binged on Alcohol Recently

On average, more than one in five Americans went on a recent drinking binge, and about one in 10 smoked marijuana in the previous year.

Those are among the conclusions from the National Surveys on Drug Use and Health, a landmark study using extensive data taken from surveys of 136,000 people to track the nation's substance abuse problem. Similar surveys in future years will be compared with this year's results to help paint a picture of how drugs affect American life.

Some regional trends are evident from the surveys, conducted in 2003 and 2004. States with the highest rates of marijuana use were Alaska, Colorado, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. Marijuana is by far the nation's most popular illicit drug. About 14.6 million people — 6.2% of the USA — used the drug at least once in the past 30 days, the study estimated. About 2.3 million Americans use cocaine, and 1 million use hallucinogens.

Continued on page 3, see Binged on Alcohol

Inside this issue:

Government Mulls Do-It-Yourself AIDS Test	1
Study: 1 in 5 have Binged on Alcohol Recently	1
HIV's ancestry traced to wild chimps	2

Special points of interest:

- One in ten Americans have smoked marijuana in the previous year.
- The first human known to be infected with HIV was a man from Kinshasa in the nearby country of Congo who had his blood stored in 1959.

HIV's ancestry traced to wild chimps

Twenty-five years after the first AIDS cases emerged, scientists have confirmed that the HIV virus plaguing humans really did originate in wild chimpanzees, in a corner of Cameroon.

Solving the mystery of HIV's ancestry was dirty work. Scientists employed trackers to plunge through dense jungle and collect the fresh feces of wild apes — more than 1,300 samples in all.

Before that, it took seven years of research just to develop the testing methods to genetically trace the primate version of the virus in living wild chimps without hurting the endangered species.

Until now, "no one was able to look. No one had the tools," said Dr. Beatrice Hahn of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She led the team of international researchers that reported the success in Friday's edition of the journal *Science*.

"We're 25 years into this pandemic," Hahn said. "We don't have a cure. We don't have a vaccine. But we know where it came from. At least we can make a check mark on one of those."

Scientists long have known that nonhuman primates carry their own version of the AIDS virus, called SIV or simian immunodeficiency virus. But with one exception, it had been found only in captive chimpanzees, particularly a subspecies that in the wild populates mostly West Africa.

It was not known how prevalent the virus was in chimps in the wild, or how genetically or geographically diverse it was, complicating efforts to pin down the jump from animal to man.

Hahn's team tested chimp feces for SIV antibodies, finding them in a subspecies called *Pan troglodytes troglodytes* in

Continued on page 3, see HIV's Ancestry

AIDS Test

Continued from page 1

quires HIV; the test will not detect the virus if it was more recently acquired.

FDA's Blood Products Advisory Committee, will consider whether to recommend the product for over-the-counter sales. The FDA has the final say; it usually follows the advice of its advisory committees.

FDA briefing documents posted on the Internet said these kits could lead to more people knowing whether they have HIV, which could mean earlier treatment of the infection. People afraid or unwilling to take the test, particularly those without any symptoms, may more readily test themselves with a kit they can use privately.

"Knowing your status is critically important," Spair said. "We want to provide that opportunity to the broadest number of people possible."

But the documents also note concerns about someone learning they probably have HIV when they are alone, with no health professional or counselor nearby.

The kits are a good idea, said Terje Anderson, executive director of the National Association of People with AIDS. He said he doubts they will be as popular as at-home pregnancy test kits, suggesting most people who want an HIV test would prefer to be with a doctor. Their use may also depend on their price.

"Overall, I would say they are a step forward," he said.

"Anything that helps more people learn their status is a good thing."

But the discovery one has HIV is "potentially traumatic," he said.

"There have got to be safeguards built in so they can get all the support they need," he said.

Spair said the company would work with FDA to develop instructions with the kit for someone who receives a positive result. He said he expects a telephone number and a web site address would be part of those instructions.

"We, together with the FDA, want to make sure that the infrastructure is in place so that folks on a 24-7 basis have access to counseling," he said.

Some companies market unapproved HIV tests for home use; the FDA says it is impossible to know if they are reliable.

One test, made by Home Access Health Corp., is approved for sale in the United States by the FDA. People taking this test must take a sample from themselves and mail it to a lab for testing.

About 1 million people in the United States are believed to have HIV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates nearly 300,000 people have the virus but don't know it.

SOURCE: Yahoo! News

Binged on Alcohol

Continued from page 1

The surveys, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, used in-person interviews with people in four age groups: 12 to 17, 18 to 25, 26 and older, and all people 12 and older. The agency changed the survey in 2004, so the new data cannot be compared with previous years.

Nine out of 10 places where a large proportion of the population uses cocaine also have the highest rate of people with serious drug dependence, the study found. The places that ranked highest for both measures were Arizona, Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Vermont. In Colorado, 3.9% had used cocaine in the past year.

A recent study found that 10% of the teens in Oklahoma had used methamphetamines and 22% were marijuana users.

About 54 million people, 22.6% of the population nationwide, participated in binge drinking at least once during the past 30 days, the study estimated. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in one sitting during the previous month. The percentage of people binge drinking far exceeds the national average in Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wisconsin.

Utah had the lowest level of past-month drug, marijuana and alcohol use and the lowest rate of binge drinking. Randall Bachman, director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health in Utah, attributes his state's low rate of drug and alcohol abuse to a combination of comprehensive preven-

Continued on page 4, see *Binged on Alcohol*

HIV's Ancestry

Continued from page 2
southern Cameroon.

Chimps tend to form geographically distinct communities. By genetically analyzing the feces, researchers could trace individual infected chimps. The team found some chimp communities with infection rates as high as 35 percent, while others had no infection at all.

Every single infected chimp had a common base genetic pattern that indicated a common ancestor, Hahn said.

There are three types of HIV-1, the strain of the human virus responsible for most of the worldwide epidemic. Genetic analysis let Hahn identify chimp communities near Cameroon's Sanaga River whose viral strains are most closely related to the most common of those HIV-1 subtypes.

"The genetic similarity was striking," Hahn said.

The first human known to be infected with HIV was a man from Kinshasa in the nearby country of Congo who had his blood stored in 1959 as part of a medical study, decades before scientists knew the AIDS virus existed.

Presumably, someone in rural Cameroon was bitten by a

chimp or was cut while butchering one and became infected with the ape virus. That person passed it to someone else.

The Sanaga River long has been a commercial waterway, for transporting hardwood, ivory and other items to more urban areas. Eventually, someone infected made it to Kinshasa.

Scientists long have known that nonhuman primates carry their own version of the AIDS virus, called SIV or simian immunodeficiency virus.

"How many different transmission events occurred between that initial hunter and this virus making it to Kinshasa, I don't know. It could have been one, it could have been 10, it could have been 100," Hahn said.

"Eventually, it ended up in an urban area, and that's where it really got going."

Somewhere in all that spread, the virus became more deadly to people than it is to chimps, who seldom are bothered much by SIV.

The research seems to settle any question of HIV's origin, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the National Institutes of Health's AIDS chief.

When tracing a virus' evolution, "it's important to get as close to the source as you can," he said. "It's of historic interest."

SOURCE: *Yahoo! News*



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Binged on Alcohol

California Drug Counseling education and counseling center provides a variety of services including behavior modification, HIV/AIDS prevention and Medical drug/alcohol counseling, Prop 36 counseling, tutoring, mentoring, sex education counseling, parenting and other counseling services.

*The office is located at
659 & 671 E Walnut Street
Pasadena, CA 91101
(626)844-0410
Fax (626)844-3135*

*The Fresh Start office provides
placement counseling and job
assistance for ex-offenders.*

*The Fresh Start office is
located at
4344 Latham St. Suite #220
Riverside, CA 92501
(951) 781-0655*

Continued from page 3

tion programs, aggressive rehabilitation and a non-drinking tone set by the Mormon church.

Utah's prevention program begins in elementary school with a curriculum that teaches how to refuse drugs and alcohol, resist peer pressure and choose a healthy lifestyle. A proposal pending before the state Legislature would screen, assess and provide treatment for drug and alcohol abusers who enter the criminal justice system.

Although two-thirds of the state is Mormon, Bachman says the state isn't immune from drug and alcohol problems. He said the state has been confronting a serious methamphetamine problem with targeted law enforcement and drug treatment programs.

"We still struggle with the same problems

that other cities and states have to deal with," Bachman said.

Western and Midwestern states have confronted serious problems with methamphetamines. In Oklahoma, law enforcement agents dismantled 1,235 methamphetamine labs in 2004, up from 10 in 1994. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey in 2004 of high school students in Oklahoma found that 10% of the teens had used methamphetamines and 22% were marijuana users.

The study showed more than 50% of Americans drank alcohol in the previous month. The hardest drinking states are Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey.

*SOURCE: USA Today
By: Donna Leinwand*