

Date: September 26, 2012  
To: Primary Care Physicians  
RE: **ROUTINE HIV TESTING IN ACUTE AND PRIMARY CARE**

As of October 2011, patients admitted to acute care hospitals in Vancouver are recommended to have an HIV test. This initiative is part of the STOP HIV/AIDS pilot project in Vancouver, aimed at improving early diagnosis and treatment of HIV.

### **Why are we offering routine HIV testing in acute care?**

1. HIV today is a manageable chronic condition; early diagnosis is essential for good prognosis.
2. Traditional testing based on perceived risk misses many patients infected with HIV. In fact, more than 60% of patients in Vancouver are diagnosed long after they ought to be on treatment, and many of those, years after they were first infected. **Those without recognizable risk factors are more likely to be diagnosed late.**
3. Frequently patients newly diagnosed with HIV have previously had **many** missed opportunities for testing. Therefore, opportunistic testing of ALL patients is recommended to improve early diagnosis.
4. The need for HIV risk identification is a known barrier to testing. By contrast, people generally accept HIV testing if they know that the test is offered to all patients as part of routine care and they are not being singled out. In hospital, 90% of patients accept an HIV test.
5. In hospitals in Vancouver during the first 6 months of the initiative, routine HIV testing has been found to be highly cost-effective with a yield of ~6 diagnoses in 1,000 tests.

### **HIV testing in Primary Care**

Ordering bloodwork for any reason in primary care is another important opportunity for HIV testing. We are asking all family physicians in Vancouver to recommend an HIV test to all adult patients who have not had one in the past year.

Ordering bloodwork is a good opportunity to say **I routinely offer and recommend an HIV test for all my patients and would like to add that to your blood tests today.** Routine testing is the only way to ensure that all those who do not know they are infected have an opportunity for early diagnosis and treatment. Patients who are currently being diagnosed with HIV include the young, the elderly; people of all ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and sexual orientations.

An HIV test is also recommended as part of routine care for everyone who is tested or diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, hepatitis C or tuberculosis.

If you have any questions or concerns about these recommendations, or if you need help with the follow-up of a newly diagnosed HIV positive patient, please do not hesitate to call us at **604-675-3900**.

As with all screening programs, routine HIV screening in Primary Care will be evaluated and recommendations will be adjusted based on the outcomes of the program.

Sincerely,



Dr. Réka Gustafson

Medical Health Officer Vancouver and Medical Director Communicable Disease Control, Vancouver Coastal Health