

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program accessible on the ReachMD network. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/womens-health-update/tbdsti-rapid-testing-why-its-more-important-than-ever/12610/>

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STI Rapid Testing: Why It's More Important Than Ever

Announcer:

Welcome to *Women's Health Update* on ReachMD. On this episode, sponsored by Cepheid, we're talking with Dr. Barbara Van Der Pol, a Professor of Medicine in infectious disease at The University of Alabama at Birmingham and Scientist at the Center for Women's Reproductive Health. She is here to discuss why rapid testing for sexually transmitted infections is more important than ever. Let's hear from her now.

Dr. Van Der Pol:

When we think about what strategies are available right now for STI testing, in the U.S., generally, we have the old paradigm of a person coming into a clinic, and getting a test collected by a provider that goes to a laboratory and takes anywhere from three to seven days to get results. We have newer options, which include direct-to-consumer testing, where people can go online, order their own test, a collection kit is sent to their home, and then test the specimen by sending it back into a lab, which again, can still take a week or so to get the results. We also have telemedicine which follows pretty much the same pathway. And then now we finally have point-of-care tests that are more rapid, where a person can go into a clinical setting, maybe not an STD clinic, maybe any kind of doctor that they normally see, and have a test result anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. And that is the best thing that we have so far. Because that allows immediate treatment of that patient during that visit with no lag time at all.

And the impact on patients for rapid testing is fairly new. We have some tests that have been available for a little while that have had a big impact where they've been used like emergency rooms. Again, being able to get treated immediately and correctly is so important to reduce the number of follow-up visits, immediately stop infections so they're not transmitted to their partners, and just in general, not overtreat because we're having to guess what the person might have. So, this has been used in places like emergency departments for about 10 years. But now we're starting to move these tests into doctor's office settings, and hopefully other settings like community-based organizations, or clinics that provide free healthcare, or school-based clinics, and so on. So, as we get more of these high-quality rapid tests available, we'll have better and better options for people to start accessing them. I envision these being done at Walmart and Walgreens and so on and so forth as we go forward.

There are problems with gonorrhea which becomes resistant to antibiotics very quickly. And understanding exactly when a patient has gonorrhea and when they don't, so that we can treat them accurately is one of the best strategies for helping us to reduce that incidence of resistance. And one of the ways to do that is to do accurate quick diagnostic tests so we can treat accurately. This is going to result in reduced possibility of transmission to partners. And it's going to result in reduced follow-up visits for symptoms that weren't managed correctly because we didn't know what the patient had. So for many reasons, a rapid test result is going to improve the experience for the patient, but also on a public health level results in community-wide improvements.

Announcer:

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