

# Improving the uptake of human immunodeficiency virus testing services globally

## INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection has been acknowledged as one of the global public health priorities.<sup>[1]</sup> This is predominantly due to the available estimates, which suggest that more than 32 million people died due to the dreaded complications of the infection by the end of 2018. It is an eye opener that despite the infection being known for more than three decades, even in 2018, a total of 1.7 million new cases were detected, with African region being the most affected.<sup>[1]</sup>

## GROUND REALITY

It is a fact that regardless of the efforts of different stakeholders at various levels of health-care delivery, the services of testing, therapy, and care are not universally available and we are not in a position to attain the set targets for 2020.<sup>[2,3]</sup> Although many people have been receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), a significant proportion of the infected individuals are not receiving ART only because of the failure of detection of the disease.<sup>[2]</sup> From the public health perspective, timely diagnosis of the infection is the critical link to ensure linkage of the infected people to a wide gamut of care and supportive services.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

## TESTING FOR HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

The World Health Organization has time and again emphasized for HIV self-testing as it has been shown that the majority of the high-risk population groups find it feasible and convenient instead of approaching the conventional health centers.<sup>[2,3]</sup> The 2019 recommendations call for adoption of a standard strategy by all the member states to get more precise results.<sup>[2]</sup>

However, in the mission to improve the accessibility of high-risk group individuals, social network-based testing

has been proposed.<sup>[2]</sup> Further, innovative strategies such as use of digital media through providing short messages along with a video which is being led by the peers have also been advocated to enhance the reach and utilization of testing services.<sup>[2]</sup> Moreover, lay providers have also been involved and it has been recommended that they should offer rapid testing for both HIV and syphilis to women during the pregnancy, which will reduce the potential risk of mother-to-child transmission.<sup>[2,4]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

HIV testing is an important dimension of the range of services offered for the prevention and control of the disease. It is the need of the hour to explore and effectively implement the new recommendations and it will essentially require concerted actions and efforts from all the stakeholders.

## Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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**Submitted:** 30-Nov-2019; **Revised:** 16-Feb-2020;

**Accepted:** 26-Feb-2020; **Published:** 27-Jul-2020;

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<p>Quick Response Code:</p> 	<p>Website: <a href="http://www.jmsjournal.net">www.jmsjournal.net</a></p> <hr/> <p>DOI: 10.4103/jrms.JRMS_886_19</p>

**How to cite this article:** Shrivastava SR, Shrivastava PS. Improving the uptake of human immunodeficiency virus testing services globally. *J Res Med Sci* 2020;25:66.