

ASSOCIATION OF NURSES IN AIDS CARE

POSITION STATEMENT

CDC Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents and Pregnant Women in Health-Care Settings

Adopted by ANAC Board of Directors, December 15, 2006
Reviewed and Revised by the ANAC Board on August 2008

Position:

It is the position of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care that:

- *Voluntary counseling and testing, with referral is an appropriate mechanism to screen for cases of HIV infection in order to provide appropriate and early care for those with HIV disease. It also serves to provide prevention messages for both infected and uninfected individuals. Thus it should be part of all routine health care.*
- *All medical care requires consent. Informed consent for HIV testing must involve more than an agreement with, conformity to, compliance with, or otherwise failure to reject the plan or proposal of a healthcare provider to perform the test.*
- *Requirements for informed consent for HIV testing should, at minimum, require the person ordering the test to inquire openly about the patient's individual understanding and misconceptions about an HIV test.*
- *New testing models should be explored and implemented when proven effective in order to reach a greater number of those at risk for HIV.*
- *Results of an HIV test must be delivered confidentially in person so that the patient understands the meaning of the test result, whether positive or negative. All patients who receive HIV positive test results should be linked into an appropriate system of care, and the provider should offer the patient information about accessing care and treatment as well as prevention information to avoid further transmission of the virus.*

Statement of Concern:

The hallmark of nursing rests in nurses' standard of care for patients. The foundation for nurses' standard of care is the empowerment of patients in matters affecting their health. The Code of Ethics of the American Nurses Association (2005) states that "The nurse strives to provide patients with opportunities to participate in planning care, assures that patients find the plans acceptable and supports the implementation of the plan" (p. 9-10). Nurses facilitate patient education. An important role of a nurse is to act as a health information translator, helping patients to fully understand how to take control of their own healthcare decisions. Nurses facilitate the transfer of medical knowledge to the patient.

The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC), representing more than 2,500 HIV nurses, believes that the CDC's revised recommendations are an important part of routine clinical care in all health-care settings. ANAC is also concerned that we preserve the patient's option to decline HIV testing all the while ensuring a provider-patient relationship conducive to optimal clinical and preventive care" (p. 8).

To ensure patient rights and good clinical care ANAC believes:

1. Prior to testing a patient must be specifically given information that an HIV test is being performed, what an HIV test is, and what test results mean. This need not be arduous, but should not be omitted. The provider should give patients an information sheet that provides key information about an HIV test.
2. HIV must be tested for when patients engage in any form of high risk behavior. Providing an annual minimum benchmark, as suggested, implies that an annual test is adequate for all persons at high risk, and is gravely misleading as a standard of practice. High risk behavior certainly can occur more than once per year. Thus, providers must convey to patients when and why an HIV test is necessary.
3. The principle of informed consent for HIV testing requires that a patient receives and indicates understanding of the meaning of an HIV test and subsequent results. Although separate forms make this arduous, it should be noted in the medical record that the provider has discussed HIV testing and the patient has at least verbally consented to testing.
4. Prevention counseling is an important part of the testing process, can easily be communicated in the course of client-centered care and should always be given in conjunction with HIV testing.

Background:

In September 2006 the CDC released revised recommendations for HIV counseling and testing in health care settings entitled: *Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents and Pregnant Women in Health-Care Settings*.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). Revised recommendations for HIV testing of adults, adolescents, and pregnant women in health-care settings. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 55, 1-24.

American Nurses Association. (2005). *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements*. Silver Spring: nursesbooks.org.