

New Zealand explores at-home testing for cervical cancer screening

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Cervical cancer is an almost entirely preventable disease, yet despite the success of the National Cervical Screening Programme 170 New Zealanders are still diagnosed with it each year, resulting in 50 deaths



About 3,000 New Zealanders are being given the opportunity to take part in a new study where they can choose to have their cervical screening test at either their doctor's surgery or in the comfort of their own home.

They are part of a new University of Otago, Christchurch-led, pilot study, backed by Te Whatu Ora's National Screening Programme, to test the impacts of implementing the newly adopted Human Papillomavirus (HPV) test which is being rolled out as the principal screening test for cervical cancer in Aotearoa New Zealand from next year.

Trial Principal Investigator and consultant gynaecologist Associate Professor Peter Sykes, from the University of Otago, Christchurch's, Department of Obstetrics, says there's been an enthusiastic uptake so far, with more than 1,500 people already signed onto the pilot study. Participants are being recruited from 17 GP clinics in the Canterbury, Whanganui and Capital and Coast regions.

"The main aim of the pilot is to identify any issues that may arise with the new HPV test programme before it's rolled out more widely from next year. It will rigorously examine all parts of the screening pathway, from the invitation to take part, the choice of either at-home or in-clinic testing, right through to how well test results are communicated and whether any follow-up treatments are required and sufficiently actioned.

The HPV self-test is much less invasive than the traditional smear test, with no speculum required. The person simply collects a sample from the vagina using a swab", Associate Professor Peter Sykes says.