

STI test kit vending machines trial to improve sexual health services in Victoria

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Further funding would allow the machines to be customised to cater to the specific needs of different communities

Free sexually transmitted infection (STI) test kit vending machines have been introduced for the first time in regional Victoria, Australia, providing accessible and affordable sexual health services to regional Victorian communities.

Launched in Echuca, the town will be the first to receive one of two custom-designed vending machines to provide free STI test kits, to test for chlamydia, gonorrhoea and HIV.

The vending machines will be moved across regional Victoria in a unique 12-month trial programme initiative led by the University of Melbourne, Department of Rural Health, Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH), funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health.

Transportation constraints, cost implications, lengthy wait times, and confidentiality concerns have compounded the issue in rural and regional communities, underscoring the urgent need for innovative solutions in sexual health promotion, testing, and treatment.

Under the trial, it is anticipated that community members will find the STI test vending machines in semi- public venues, obtain a test kit within 60-90 seconds, and will complete the specimen collection in a private setting. Access to the STI test vending machines may be limited during the pilot phase.

Once completed, test kits will be posted to the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre for testing. Individuals requiring treatment will be contacted and will receive appropriate care in a safe and suitable location.