What the porn industry can teach us about how to live safely with coronavirus

Since the late 1990s, when an outbreak of HIV infections threatened to shutter the multibillion-dollar industry, the mainstream porn community has implemented procedures that require all performers to be tested for HIV and a host of other sexually transmitted infections every 14 days before they can be cleared to work. Any HIV-positive test leads to an immediate shutdown of all U.S. sets, followed by detailed contact tracing before sets can reopen.

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In the 20 years it has been in place, PASS has met, and overcome, many of the same challenges that any large-scale coronavirus testing program might encounter, from issues of keeping databases of private medical information secure, preventing the forging of test results, dealing with false positive results, and educating workers about the need for repeated testing to keep workplaces safe.

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"In many ways, what they are doing is a model for what we are trying to do with Covid," said Ashish Jha, a physician who directs Harvard University's Global Health Institute and has been calling for widespread national testing to contain the coronavirus. "The adult film industry teaches us that as a proof of concept, this can work. We just have to scale it up."

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