

Viewpoint: At-home test detects cervical cancer early. It should be available to all women

I'm a public health nurse who has spent a career studying ways to better test women for the human papillomavirus (HPV), the main cause of cervical cancer, so they can get early and lifesaving treatment. In rural, resource-limited areas — in the U.S. as well as abroad — I've seen how this disease claims lives and fractures families.

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The HPV self-collection test I've used in my research in both [rural Virginia](#) and Nicaragua makes it possible for women to collect their own cervical sample in the privacy of their homes and mail to a lab to be tested. I urge the Food and Drug Administration to approve at-home self-collection of HPV samples for primary cervical cancer screening so it can be more widely available to women who routinely go unscreened. By making home testing kits and follow-up care more available, we can curb the anticipated spike in preventable cervical cancer cases that Covid-19 will inevitably bring.

That first step — approving a kit for women to collect cervical samples at home — has a new and urgent relevance in this era of social distancing. It is a portal through which more women will be saved from cervical cancer, in the U.S. and around the world.

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