MONDAY MAY 15 1995

New Test for HIV Approved

By SHACKEE TAURO

Samples of saliva and other oral

fluids can now be used to detect

*the* presence of Human Immuno deficiency

Virus (HIV), the virus that causes Aids, a medical scientific journal says.

*The African Journal of Medical'* issue of June 1995

says the Food and Drug Administration

of the United States has announced it has approved the

first US HIV test system using

oral fluids samples. Until now,

HIV tests have used blood sample,

The disclosure will be of major

interest to developing countries

where the cost of HIV test is

proving: prohibitive in terms of

equipment and maintenance

costs.

Local HIV tests are currently

done using Enzyme Linked

Immuno sorbent Assay (ELISA) test· or Rapid Assay test~ approved

by the Ministry of Health,

on blood samples obtained from

patients for diagnosis or from

samples of donated blood before

it is transfused. HIV test reagents

are obtained from manufacturers

abroad based on the old

Health Organization approved

standards. Although the journal, says the

new *test* is not as accurate as the

approved HIV tests using blood.

studies indicate that fur every

100 people infected with HIV, the

*oral. Fluid* test will miss OILY one

or two. The FDA has also approved

both a product for collecting

specimens of oral fluid and a specific

test used to analyses the

specimens for the presence of

HIV. However, the use of the

specimen collection product is subject to several restriction.

The restrictions are its availability for purchase and distribution

only through physicians, proper training of individuals administering it, and it must not be provided to people for home use. Other restrictions are that the

test system may be used for diagnosis

only" and must not be used to screen blood donors.

The text system is intended for use in people over 13 years of age,

and includes a specially treated

Cotton paid on a stick and preservative "solution in a plastic

container.

A trailed collector instructs a

person t ) place the pad between

the lower gum and the cheek to ,

obtain a sample of oral fluid. The

pad is then stored in the preservative

until the sample is processed

and analyzed using an

ELISA test specifically licensed

for testing oral samples.

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