

Don't use or trust HIV home test kits-specialists (*Cape Times, Pretoria News, 05 Nov*)

HIV home-testing kits may produce fast results, but they are frequently faulty or used incorrectly and people should not buy them, the National Pathology Group (NPG) - a sub-group of the South African Medical Association - has warned.

The group issued the statement in response to a Cape Times report about a student who was sold a home test kit by a pharmacist last month without being offered counselling. Controls are not as exact as they should be, said Lynne Webber, a clinical virologist at the NPG's Lancet Laboratories.

The NPG had no idea whether the kits were validated for efficacy when they entered the country. "We have no idea what their accuracy rate is, which makes it worse. A home test would have to be verified by a laboratory test anyway, and a false positive home test result could cause unnecessary anguish.

Home tests were imported from all over the world and there was no quality control or set standard for their importation," the NPG statement said.

Also, different areas of the world had different strains of HIV and there was no surety that these kits would work for the strain prevalent in the South African population.