



**MEDIA RELEASE: MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2020**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*[You can get anything out of a vending machine – even an HIV test](#)*

As an innovative way of ensuring those at risk of acquiring HIV can test often, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF) has created custom smart vending machines that distribute HIV self-tests.

These machines will find their new homes in local venues where gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men congregate – providing tests to people who can often fall through the gaps of wider public healthcare or need to be discreet about their sexuality.

“We know there are many barriers that can stop people testing for HIV – stigma, cost, accessibility, homophobia, fear, awareness, discretion and more. This is why we are always innovating in this space, to ensure we can meet people where they are and give them the tools they need to take control of their sexual health. This is how we’ll stop further transmission of HIV in our communities. As we know, HIV is most dangerous when undiagnosed,” says NZAF Chief Executive Dr Jason Myers.

“These vending machines can exist in spaces where those who are most at risk gather and gives them an option that is private and accessible. It’s right there in the lobby on their way into these spaces, ready to use without fear of judgement or being ‘outed’.”

NZAF piloted this concept by installing a vending machine in Auckland’s Centurian Sauna. Results from this pilot showed that of those who used the tests, 28% indicated that they had not tested within the last 12 months. This is a good indicator that the vending machines are getting tests to people who need them the most.

Thanks to the support of a grant from the ProCare Charitable Foundation, NZAF was able to put \$26,100 toward three brand-new vending machines, due to be installed now that Auckland has returned to COVID-19 Alert Level 1. GSK also contributed \$6,500 to help make this project a reality.

ProCare Charitable Foundation chair June McCabe says, “We know that increasing access to health care drives positive health outcomes and so it’s great to be able to support the New Zealand AIDS Foundation’s aim to make accessing an HIV test as simple as possible.”

Myers says he is excited to see how NZAF can extend the impact of this project thanks to the new units.

“Having more of these machines in venues will enable more men who may need to be discreet, or aren’t able to have conversations about sexual practice with their healthcare providers, to test themselves in the comfort of their own homes.”

Encouraging regular testing is a key pillar of the HIV response. Testing often ensures that people who do contract HIV can know their status and begin treatment sooner, which ensures the best health outcomes and halts onward transmission.

**Key data:**

- Of the 162 people who used the tests during the pilot, 28% indicated that they had not tested within the last 12 months.
- 98% of vending machine users who completed the evaluation said they would use the machine again.
- 50% of gay and bisexual men are not 'out' to their healthcare providers.

**For further comment please contact:****Matt Bain**

Media Liaison

New Zealand AIDS Foundation | Te Tūāpapa Mate Āraikore o Aotearoa

+64 21 741 604 | +64 9 306 3420 | [matt.bain@nzaf.org.nz](mailto:matt.bain@nzaf.org.nz)