Why Is Getting a Coronavirus Test So Hard?

Blame the difficulty individuals face to obtain an exam for COVID-19 on the strict guidelines that people must meet.

March 19, 2020 By Kate Ferguson

This past weekend, I spoke with Imhotep Gary Byrd on his popular community affairs program "iGBE:Imhotep Gary Byrd's Express Yourself," about what's happening with testing and effective ways to help prevent transmission of the coronavirus.

Despite the wisdom of distancing yourself socially from others and self-isolating if you feel sick as I mentioned during this interview, there comes a time when getting tested is critical.

But, according to reports, although assurances on government health websites that labs in all 50 states—and Washington, DC—offer testing, individuals requesting exams are still being turned away.

Reasons ranged from a shortage of tests or testing supplies to people not meeting the criteria to secure an exam. For example, according to many reports, people were turned away for testing if they could not prove they'd been exposed to someone who had already tested as positive for the coronavirus, had traveled to one of the countries outside the United States that was heavily affected by COVID-19 or were high-risk patients.

Doctors protested that the testing criteria established by state public health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should be loosened to allow physicians to use their own discretion to determine who should be tested.

Here's another complaint: Failure to test early for the coronavirus will limit opportunities for health providers to properly identify, treat and isolate patients, which means that many more lives will be lost.

For more about the coronavirus health crisis, click here and here.

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