

Health official receives recognition in Taiwan for HIV prevention

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Chang Kai-hsiang, an official at Hualien County Health Bureau, received an excellence award for disease prevention in Taipei recently for making available human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) home testing kits through convenience store pickup services.

A specialist in the prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Chang received the award at a ceremony at the Sheraton Hotel in Taipei for his initiative that has made the kits more accessible not only in Hualien but around Taiwan.

Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control launched a simple HIV saliva test program in September last year and distributed 4,812 test kits during a three-month trial period.

In a survey of those who took part in the program, 1 percent tested positive for the virus and 40 percent said it was the first time they were being tested for HIV, indicating that people appreciated the program's privacy and convenience.

Chang found that the HIV home testing kit was highly accurate but getting it into people's hands was challenging.