Written by Lisa Crocco, Daily Vidette Reporter
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A new website, Iwantthekit.org, was launched in order to provide free in-home STD testing kits to young adults in six states, including Illinois.

Charlotte Gaydos, the website and program developer of “I Want the Kit” and a professor of infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins University said by using the Internet she wanted to reach young adults who have the highest prevalence of contracting an STD.

Young adults can go to the website and request a kit. The kits are then mailed in a plain envelope with a swab, questionnaire, information about STDs and a consent form.

Patients are given an identification number and pass code to get their results by phone in two weeks. The appointments are made in a local clinic of the patient’s choice for those who test positive.

“The benefits seem to be that it may be a way to get more people tested for STDs who are not comfortable with going to a health care facility to seek testing,” Jim Almeda, health educator of Health Promotion and Wellness, said.

Almeda added it might also increase convenience by utilizing technology that reaches more young people while making them more comfortable with getting tested. Since it is free, it also reduces any barriers that are associated with a fee for service.

Erin Ripley, communicable disease investigator at McLean County Health Department, said this is the only in-home testing kit program that she would recommend to people who wanted to get tested for STDs. She also said this is an absolute effective way to help young adults get tested for STDs, especially those who are afraid to get tested.

There are some negatives that exist when it comes to the in-home testing kits, as well. About 43 percent who take the test return the swabs.

“The negatives would be the lack of education, such as if you have specific questions about STDs you have no one to ask to ask that to or if you encounter any problem collecting your specimen or if you think you have messed up your collection, you do not have someone right there to tell you what to do,” Ripley said.

“I haven’t seen any information about how accurate and reliable the home test kits are. This could be a concern since the person is using a swab to take a sample themselves, and if not done correctly, it could lead to a false negative meaning the person might have their test results come back negative, even though they are infected with an STD, and therefore they would think they don’t have to worry about getting treated or infecting others,” he added.

A certain stigma oftentimes surrounds a person getting tested for an STD and this program can help young adults feel more comfortable about taking the test since they do it in the privacy of their own homes.

STD testing is available at Student Health Services.

People can also contact the McLean County Health Department Clinic for information about STD testing or to set up an appointment at (309) 888-5435.