

False-Positive HIV Test

Madam, Recently a lady aged 32 in her second pregnancy tested HIV antibody positive by the ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) screening test, but negative by the Western Blot assessment (Letters to the Editor, Dawn April 5, 2004), which is a definitive confirmatory test, except if one is infected with HIV during the 3-month window period. That approximately 1.26% of ELISA tests give positive results which are proven false by the Western Blot is well documented in literature, which should be noted by medical practitioners and labs in the country that conduct screening tests in order to counteract traumatic social impasse. ELISA can be HIV antibody false-positive in the uninfected for several reasons, because each individual in life is exposed to plethora of foreign antigens which can initiate poorly-understood cross-reactions¹; these include, among others, naturally occurring antibodies, autoimmune disease (e.g. SLE and rheumatoid arthritis), pregnancy in multiparous women², TB and leprosy, malaria, Flu and upper respiratory infections³, blood transfusions, 13% of alcoholics with hepatitis, liver dis-

eases¹, 4% of hemodialysis patients and 19% of those with hemophilia¹, or noteworthy, even following recent vaccinations for hepatitis B⁴, tetanus, rabies and influenza.⁵

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References

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