Robots to shed light on sexual disease

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It won't be long before automated DNA test contribute to providing more knowledge about the up to now nearly unknown sexually transmitted mycoplasma – truly more widespread than chlamydia. Mycoplasma is a bacterial infection of the genitals.

More effective and comprehensive testing of target groups could reveal more about the as yet little studied sexually transmitted bacterial disease mycoplasma, just is as already done to demonstrate other sexually transmitted illnesses such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

The DNA test products are developed by the Norwegian company Genpoint AS. Genpoint's methods identify and analyse bacterial diseases by mean of DNA analysis.

Genpoint assertains that the method can be used to effectively point out and analyse mycoplasma, or mycoplasma genitalis, as the sexually transmitted variant is called.

-There is reason to believe that this is at least as widespread as chlamydia in Norway, but those who are infected don't know about it because symptoms are not usually noticeable. microbiologist Dagfinn Stroemme

-The existing test methods mean that far fewer than is desireable have been tested because the capacity to test more does not exist in the healthcare system. Our tests will make it possible to test a greater number of the population, going beyond the traditional risk groups."

After having reaped good results with testing for chlamydia, until now thought to be the most widespread sexually transmitted illness in Norway, the expectations at Genpoint and in hospitals is great that this diagnostic tool can be used in relation to mycoplasma.

This is a virginal area when it applies to mapping the causes, who has the disease, how it behaves and what other related illnesses those who are infected this bacteria might have.

Tests for this sexually transmitted disease is not performed often enough. There is no routine testing, as there is for chlamydia, so it is in many ways undefined and undiagnosed. With our method several are tested for, bacterial infection is revealed and in this way contribute to reaching a clearer picture of the illness than we have previously had the opportunity for.

The new test methods are neither painful nor uncomfortable. Automated and reliable tests are performed on a urine sample.

Building robots

For a period of verification and clinical diagnostic trials, two analysis instruments, or robots, have been installed at the University Hospital of North Norway, Tromsø, and at the Ullevål University Hospital in Oslo. More than 25,000 persons have now been tested for chlamydia by this method. Now the method will be tested with mycoplasma.