

## **Researcher Returns to Jamaica to Combat HIV**

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A few years after free HIV medication was made available to developing countries in 2004, public health researcher Katherine Andrinopoulos began working alongside officials at the Jamaican Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Health to roll out testing and treatment initiatives at the island's largest prison. Now, she is returning to the prison to encourage continued prevention and treatment services for inmates after they are released.



Katherine Andrinopoulos, assistant professor in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, specializes in social and behavioral determinants of health, HIV/AIDS and incarcerated populations. (By Paula Burch-Celentano)

In prison institutions, where there is both a high rate of homophobia and a certain risk of exposure to HIV, it is important to carefully introduce HIV testing without stigmatizing inmates who agree to the tests and treatments, [Andrinopoulos](#) says. She is an assistant professor in the Department of International Health and Development.

“Prisoners globally have a higher prevalence of HIV because they are generally people of higher-risk backgrounds,” says Andrinopoulos. “They may have been

involved in sex work, drug use or may have been exposed to the virus during incarceration.”

Now that the system of testing prisoners for HIV has been in place at the prison for a few years, Andrinopoulos hopes to create a process that will encourage released inmates to continue taking the antiretroviral drugs used to slow the effects of HIV.

Andrinopoulos plans to explore the complexities of sexual behavior of inmates and their partners through interviews while they are incarcerated, one week after they are released and again three months after they are released.

“We are trying to understand what the sexual network of released inmates is like,” says Andrinopoulos. “What risk do they bring back to the community, and what we can do to decrease the risk vulnerability to HIV as they return to the community?”

Her research, to begin this spring, is funded through the [Framework for Global Health Program](#) sponsored by the [Office of Global Health](#) in the [Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#).