$4.5M Grant to Fund Over 150,000 HIV Tests per Year in Chicago

The federal money was awarded to the xTLC program, which will expand to include Howard Brown Health Center.

October 10, 2019 By Trent Straube

Thanks to a $4.5 million federal public health grant, the University of Chicago Medicine will be able to expand HIV testing at several hospitals and partner institutions. According to a press release from UChicago Medicine, the five-year grant will benefit the hospital's Expanded HIV Testing and Linkage to Care (xTLC) program.

The xTLC program plans to use the grant to conduct more than 150,000 tests annually. In comparison, xTLC administered 104,000 tests last year.

The funding will help the hospital expand testing at sites on the south and west sides of Chicago and to offer them in suburban Cook County. What's more, 16 groups are partnering with UChicago Medicine on the testing initiative, including Howard Brown Health Center, which focuses on LGBT health and has locations across the city.

"It's all part of the bigger effort toward HIV elimination," said David Pitrak, MD, who leads the xTLC program and codirects the Chicago Center for HIV Elimination (CCHE). "We're definitely a leading institution in this area," Pitrak said. "And we're the major provider of HIV care and preventative services on the South Side, which is a disproportionately affected area."

The cost of the tests is covered by insurance, Pitrak said in the press release, adding that if a person is uninsured, the hospital will usually waive the cost.

Nearly 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States, and about 14% of them don't know their status—that translates to about one in seven, or a total of 240,000 people.

In related news, watch a music video "Let's Talk About PrEP, Baby" by Howard Brown Health that promotes HIV prevention, and read about the center's effort to address trans health here.

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