$4.5M Joint Effort to Improve Black HIV Care in Three Southern Cities

Gilead Sciences, the Morehouse School of Medicine and Xavier University boost HIV care for Black Americans in a COVID-impacted South.

August 17, 2022 By Trent Straube

For several years now, national HIV rates have been highest in the South, notably among Black Americans. The region also lags in access to HIV prevention, care and treatment—a situation that has only worsened since the arrival of COVID-19. But a new $4.5 million collaboration funded by drugmaker Gilead Sciences aims to address HIV health inequities in the South.

To address HIV care among Black Americans in the South, Gilead has teamed up with the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta and the Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education at Xavier University of Louisiana's College of Pharmacy.

> The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities in #HIV care, particularly for Black communities in the U.S. South. We're proud to collaborate with @MSMEDU's Satcher Health Leadership Institute and @XULA1925 to help advance health equity. https://t.co/QbtWqm5MDj pic.twitter.com/XVs56itap3
>
> — Gilead Sciences (@GileadSciences) August 17, 2022

The funding lasts for three years and aims to improve HIV care for Black communities in three cities: Baton Rouge and New Orleans in Louisiana and Atlanta.

According to the Gilead press release, the partnership aims to close crucial gaps in care by:

- Increasing understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on the health care delivery system in the Black community;
- Realigning HIV services to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Providing training focused on culturally appropriate HIV care, inclusive of stigma-reducing strategies; and
- Increasing access to and utilization of culturally appropriate care for Black people impacted by the HIV epidemic.

The collaboration was announced in the days leading up to the annual Southern HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (#SHAAD), which takes place Saturday, August 20.

"Gilead knows that scientific innovation has the most impact on patients when we help remove societal barriers to care, such as discrimination and stigma. We are committed to investing in organizations, community leaders and experts working to address the underlying determinants of health outcomes," said Rashad Burgess, Gilead's vice president of advancing health and Black equity, in the press statement. "This collaboration will focus on the barriers that are most prevalent in Black communities and help increase access to HIV care to produce better outcomes for Black people."

Black Americans comprised less than 1/5 of the #Southern population in 2019, but half of all new #HIV diagnoses in the region in 2019. Learn more about #HIV among Black Americans in the #South for #SHAAD: https://t.co/NJcDFcsGMW pic.twitter.com/aFNzUf0EWq

— AIDSVu (@AIDSVu) August 19, 2021

“Though the COVID-19 pandemic was a setback to the American health care system overall, we must bring to the forefront disproportionately impacted communities who were already historically marginalized prior to the pandemic, including people living with HIV,” added Daniel E. Dawes, JD, executive director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine and author of The Political Determinants of Health. “The Satcher Health Leadership Institute will collaborate with Gilead and Xavier University of Louisiana to ensure these communities are not an afterthought.”

“Xavier’s Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education in the College of Pharmacy is proud to partner with Gilead and the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine for such an important initiative,” said Kathleen Kennedy, PharmD, the dean of Xavier’s College of Pharmacy. “Xavier is a top producer of African Americans with a doctor of pharmacy degree, and we instill in our graduates the mission of Xavier and the desire to serve the underserved with an effort to mitigate health disparities for underrepresented communities.”

To learn more about HIV in the Southern United States, click #South. You’ll find articles about racial disparities in monkeypox cases and in pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV as well as information on Gilead’s COMPASS Initiative to fund HIV groups in the South and on Lil Nas X’s visit to Southern organizations fighting HIV.

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