Brazil Offers Free PrEP to Prevent HIV Among Youth

The government pays the maker of Truvada about 75 cents a pill; the same dose costs about $50 in the United States.

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Alarmed by the rise in HIV among Brazilian youth, the government of Brazil is now providing the daily prevention pill Truvada as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) at no cost, The New York Times reports.

The Brazilian Health Ministry is paying Gilead Sciences, the maker of the drug, about 75 cents a dose; in the United States, a month's supply costs about $1,600. Two other pharmaceutical companies have applied to Brazil's health agency for approval of generic Truvada.

According to the Times, the pill will be available at 35 public health clinics in 22 cities for the first phase of the program. Screenings and additional care are also provided at no cost at the clinics. The goal is to lower the cost of the pill even more.

Last year, about 48,000 people were diagnosed with HIV in Brazil, and 14,000 AIDS-related deaths were reported. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reported that HIV cases among men ages 20 to 24 almost doubled between 2006 and 2015; among men ages 15 to 19, the rate nearly tripled.

"With the addition of PrEP, Brazil is using all of the strategies that we recommend," Georgiana Braga-Orillard, the director of UNAIDS Brazil, told the Times. "This is a large-scale operation, and Brazil could become an example to all of Latin America that we need to see an integrated approach."

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