New Efforts to #BreakThePatent on HIV Prevention Pill Truvada

If the price is lowered with a generic version, activists say, “we could end the HIV epidemic without a vaccine.”

February 25, 2019 By Trent Straube

We know that HIV prevention drug Truvada works really well when taken daily. But Americans pay over $1,600 for a 30-day supply that costs less than $6 to make. Generic versions will make the med affordable. In fact, by breaking the patent on Truvada, “we could end the HIV epidemic without a vaccine,” claims a group of grassroots activists called The PrEP4All Collaboration on its website, BreakThePatent.org.

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“Roses are red, PrEP is blue, Women get HIV too.” #HIValentinesDay #HIV #AIDS #ValentinesDay #VDay

A post shared by ACT UP NY (@actupny) on Feb 14, 2019 at 6:51am PST

Launched last summer, the campaign got a boost this month when activists protested on Valentine's Day and New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, who is living with HIV, called on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to break Gilead Sciences patent to exclusively manufacture the drug.

Johnson made the announcement on Presidents Day at the New York City AIDS Memorial, where he was joined by HIV activists and local politicians.



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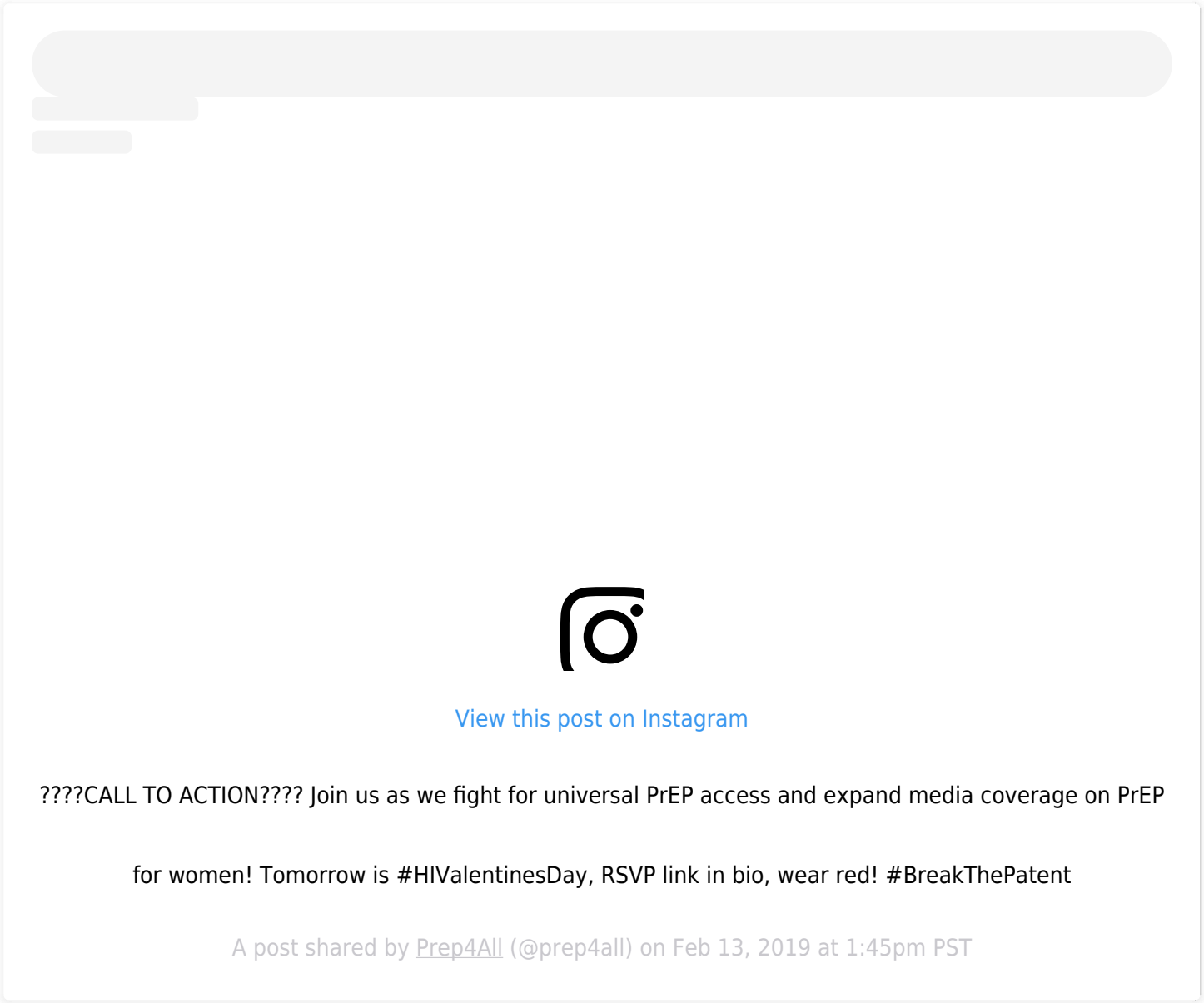
Spent the afternoon calling out the gross profiteering of PrEP from pharma company @gileadsciences and how we need to #BreakthePatent to reach the long neglected communities that haven't been a part of PrEP rollout and HIV policy work. Thanks to my dear friend and our Speaker @coreyjohnsonnyc for hosting this much needed presser on #PresidentsDay. cc @actupny x @breakthepatent

A post shared by Jason David Rosenberg (@mynameisjro) on Feb 18, 2019 at 2:08pm PST

"The cost of PrEP in our country reveals something deeply rotten about our health care system, and the NIH needs to march in and break the patent immediately. This is life or death, and there is no time to waste," said Johnson in a statement reported by NBC News.

On Valentine's Day, PrEP4All and ACT UP New York joined together for a protest outside

Cosmopolitan magazine’s offices to raise awareness that women need access to PrEP too—as well as better media coverage regarding their risks for HIV.



Also in February, the activists took to social media to criticize Gilead Sciences as it ran an advertisement for Truvada as PrEP during the broadcast of the musical Rent. “Stop pharma greed,” one ACT UP New York message read. “Truvada can prevent HIV infection, but it costs more than $1,600 a month. Help change that. Sign the petition to #BreakThePatent.”

View this post on Instagram

New article up! Link in bio. Last night I watched #RentLive and tweeted along with friends. During the performance I noticed the @actupny Twitter account was going ham on a pharmaceutical giant for an overpriced life saving medication. I was moved to write a short piece on the exchange. @gileadsciences must #breakthepatent

A post shared by Anoa (@thewaywithanoa) on Jan 28, 2019 at 8:32am PST

PrEP4All points out that research into Truvada as PrEP was paid for by U.S. taxpayers through the NIH. What's more, the group outlines a legal path to break the patent: march-in rights under the Bayh-Dole Act, or the Patent and Trademark Law Amendments Act. For more details, read the POZ article "Here's How We Can Get Universal Access to PrEP."

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