PrEP May Be Available Without a Doc's Prescription in Two More States

They would follow the lead of California, which allows pharmacies to dispense a 30-day supply of the HIV prevention pill without a script.

January 31, 2020 By Trent Straube

Colorado and Oregon could become the next two states to allow pharmacists to prescribe pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP) without a doctor's prescription. Lawmakers in both states introduced legislation earlier this year to allow easier and faster access to the HIV prevention pills.

Last year, California passed a similar bill. It went into effect January 1, 2020.

Colorado lawmakers introduced a bill on January 1 that would allow pharmacists to prescribe PrEP or PEP without a prescription from a doctor. The legislation would also prevent health insurers from requiring their clients to obtain an authorization before using their insurance to pay for the preventive meds, according to the Loveland Reporter Herald.

More than 14,000 people are living with HIV in Colorado, reports the newspaper.

In Oregon, lawmakers introduced similar bills. Advocates told the Portland Mercury that the legislation is needed to help people in rural areas more easily access health care resources.

"Access continues to be one of the number one areas that we anecdotally hear from our patients about why they aren't using PrEP," Tyler TerMeer, CEO of the Cascade AIDS Project, told the newspaper, "or why certain patients who come to our LGBTQ+ health center here, Prism Health, drive for multiple hours across Oregon to come and get their culturally safe services from our primary care providers."

Between 210 and 230 people in Oregon are diagnosed with HIV each year, according to End HIV Oregon, an initiative to end the epidemic in that state.

PrEP is for HIV-negative people at risk for the virus. It's to be taken daily. PEP is another daily regimen. It is to be taken by HIV-negative people no more than 72 hours after a high-risk exposure. (To learn more, see the POZ Basics on HIV Prevention: PEP and PrEP.)

Currently, only two combo tablets are approved as PrEP. Both are manufactured by Gilead Sciences. They include Truvada (made of tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine) and Descovy (made of tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine). Descovy includes a new version of tenofovir that is linked to better markers of kidney and bone health.

Scientists estimate that when PrEP is taken daily, it reduces the risk of contracting HIV by 99% or more among men who have sex with men (MSM). The risk reduction for heterosexual men and women may very well be similar to MSM. Existing evidence of recent PrEP use shows a reduced risk of 88% to 99%, but more data are needed to arrive at a more precise figure.

To learn more, see "How Well Do U=U and PrEP Work? The CDC Updates Its Answers."

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