PrEP Uptake

Promoting HIV prevention among Latinos and African Americans

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The Boriken Neighborhood Health Center of East Harlem launched an HIV prevention campaign titled “I Matter Therefore I PrEP,” a reference to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a daily pill that HIV-negative people can take to prevent contracting HIV. A response to research showing that the rate of new HIV diagnoses in East Harlem is two times that of the rest of New York City, the campaign targets Black and Latino men ages 20 to 39 and Black women ages 30 to 49 through ads on buses, local venues and social media.

Also in New York City, the nonprofit health plan Amida Care has been holding virtual town halls to help boost PrEP uptake among underserved communities, such as Black women in the Bronx (you can watch the events on Amida Care’s YouTube channel).

Nationwide, African Americans represented 13% of the population in 2019 but accounted for 43% of new HIV diagnoses. Latinos represented 16% of the population and accounted for 26% of new HIV cases. Generally, HIV rates are higher among Black and Latino gay and bisexual men and transgender women of color.

Data presented at this year’s Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections show that investing in local communities is a great way to improve HIV outcomes for these underserved groups. Specifically, researchers found that HIV rates among young Black same-gender-loving men decreased in cities where local community groups received federal PrEP funding through the THRIVE program, while the rates increased in similar cities without those funds (click here).

The Boriken center’s PrEP outreach and Amida Care’s roundtables might further support the idea of investing in local prevention efforts. “Since the launch of [the ‘I Matter Therefore I PrEP’ campaign], we have had multiple walk-ins inquiring about our trans health services as well as messages on our social media platforms inquiring how to [get] HIV services and get on PrEP,” Paul Bolter, the HIV services coordinator at Boriken, tells POZ. “The word is out on the street about this campaign and how familiar and representative it is of our community.”

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