Testing, Treatment and PrEP Could Slash HIV Cases

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has projected that fully achieving the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) goals for expanded HIV testing and treatment and expanding the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) could reduce new HIV infections by 70 percent in five years.

Researchers at the CDC used a forecasting model to predict how well each of these strategies would reduce the spread of the virus.

The CDC points to an oft-cited estimate that less than a third of HIV-positive Americans have a fully suppressed virus (although other researchers believe this figure, which applies to 2011, may be an underestimate).

The CDC projects that reaching the NHAS goal of getting 80 percent of people with HIV to full viral suppression would prevent 168,000 infections in five years. (Research suggests that having a fully suppressed viral load means transmitting the virus is extremely unlikely.) Expanding the use of Truvada (tenofovir/emtricitabine) as PrEP among those at high risk of the virus could prevent an additional 17,000 new HIV cases by 2020.

If current levels of testing and viral suppression remain constant, it's estimated that expanded PrEP among those at high risk for HIV could prevent more than 48,000 new infections, cutting new cases by 20 percent.

"We must continue to focus on eliminating HIV disparities that exist within the black community," stresses Eugene McCray, director of the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention at the CDC. "There are also alarming disparities of HIV treatment and testing among states. Some states, especially in the South, are years behind the rest of the U.S. in providing key prevention and treatment services."

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