Top Takeaways on HIV, Hepatitis C and LGBTQ Health From SYNC 2021

News and tweets from the SYNChronicity 2021 Conference on HIV, hepatitis C, sexually transmitted infections and LGBTQ health

September 29, 2021 By Trent Straube

National experts and advocates in HIV, viral hepatitis, LGBTQ health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) gathered virtually last week for the SYNChronicity 2021 Conference to share their insights. Wouldn't you like to know what was discussed? Well, you're in luck! Below, we've gathered several main takeaways and tweets from the event.

> White House ONAP Director Harold Phillips informs #SYNC2021 that the third national #HIV / #AIDS Strategy (NHAS) will be released by World AIDS Day on December 1st, 2021!
>
> — SYNChronicity Conference (@2021SYNC) September 21, 2021

For example, during the opening plenary, Harold Phillips, MRP, who recently became the White House director of the Office of AIDS Policy—aka the country's AIDS Czar—told the audience that the third National HIV/AIDS Strategy will be unveiled this year on World AIDS Day, December 1. He also reiterated the importance of local and community work and the presence of people living with HIV in ending the HIV epidemic.

> Dr. Corey predicts that the gamechanger for the #HIV

vaccine will be monoclonal antibodies, which have also been a critical breakthrough in #COVID19 vaccine development. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/mOTCJsS7Me

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In a plenary discussion about the role of government in ending epidemics, Dimitri Daskalakis, MD, MPH, a gay doctor and activist who leads HIV prevention efforts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said stigma is the biggest barrier to accessing HIV care and adhering to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), the daily tablet to prevent contracting the virus.

Kelly Ducheny explains how @howardbrownhc engaged in participatory research with the trans and nonbinary community. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/KbQu7jmYiN

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For more bite-sized nuggets of info, visit @2021SYNC on Facebook and @2021SYNC on Twitter to scroll through a collection of posts from the conference. If you'd rather listen to the full discussions, they're available on demand for a year. You can register at any time at SYNC2021.org. Registration fees range from $25 for students to $90 for individuals ($65 for people in groups of five or more). Continuing education credits are available.

Michelle Lopez of @GMHC notes during a session on Black women's health that when data show poorer health outcomes among Black women, what isn't so

readily seen are the structural inequities that create those outcomes. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/idHMFz9V2j

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The eighth annual national conference was hosted by HealthHIV, HealthHCV and the National Coalition for LGBT Health. “The SYNChronicity Conference is the only national conference that connects numerous health care and public health audiences and systems in a dynamic health care environment to effectively address HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), LGBTQ health, and health equity,” write the event organizers on the website. “The name, SYNChronicity, arises from our approach—to SYNC various audiences with a wide variety of topics with the intended outcomes of advancing HIV, HCV, STI, and LGBTQ health—and our recognition that to End the Epidemics we need to SYNC fields, efforts and resources.”

Murray Penner of @PreventionAC, the organization behind the #U=U movement, explains in Plenary 7 of #SYNC2021 how having an Undetectable viral load = being Untransmittable during sex. pic.twitter.com/tjONCyvQ3w

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The website also includes poster presentation and full videos of the plenary discussions, including slides and Q&As. To give you a better idea of the breadth of the discussions, here are sample titles and summaries of discussions you can watch:

- SYNCing to End the Epidemics Through Science This plenary looks at the latest in scientific

advances in prevention and treatment research. The discussion starts with a recognition that many of the same forces and inequities that drive one epidemic fuel the rest and that scientific advancements in one field can lead to breakthroughs in another. During the height of the pandemic, advancements in COVID-19 vaccine research advanced at a stunning pace. These advancements were expedited, in part, by the groundwork laid by more than 30 years of HIV vaccine research.

Javontae Williams of @PHLPublicHealth discusses how "pattern interrupting" works to successfully market #HIV Self-Testing programs via social media: Use "visually stunning" ads to interrupt scrolling on social media and drive attention to our messages. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/80WFQnFMrq

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- SYNC Session: HIV, HCV, STI, and COVID-19-Related Stigma, Racism, Homophobia, and Transphobia: Intersections, Social Determinants, and Structures Participants learn how stigma and various isms create interrelated oppressions that fuel, amplify, and reinscribe the ongoing marginalization of underserved populations in the U.S.

- SYNC Institute: Aging With HIV Institute By 2030, nearly 75% of all people living with HIV (PWH) in the U.S. will be age 50 and older. 84% will most likely have at least one (1) additional comorbidity; 28% will have three (3)—compared with only 19% of those not living with HIV.

Together with community leaders, provider participants discuss and frame their shared experience into adaptive and innovative recommendations and evidence-based interventions that reduce disability and improve service delivery.

Dan Scales of @VentHealth points out that pharmacies are an important point of access in the community because they aren't associated with stigma. Pharmacies can provide #HIV testing and prevention services to reach people who may otherwise not seek care. #SYNC2021

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- SYNCing to End the Epidemics Through Transgender Health (Presented by Gilead) This plenary session explores lessons learned, challenges, and strategies for increased engagement within transgender communities to ensure retention in both treatment and prevention services.

- SYNC Institute: Hepatitis C/HIV/HCV Co-Infection Institute This session will provide an overview of how health departments, health care organizations, academic research centers, and community-based organizations are supporting hepatitis C (HCV) elimination efforts around the U.S.

Dr. Steven Shoptaw of @UCLA draws attention to the

stark increase of opioid-related deaths in the US. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/0OA6GjNFkD

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- SYNCing to End the Epidemics Through Communities This plenary session features community and organizational representatives from diverse communities throughout the U.S. working with communities to address the social determinants of HIV, hepatitis C, STIs, opioid use, and now COVID-19 through a health equity and social justice lens. A dynamic panel of speakers discuss their approaches to establishing equitable partnerships with underserved populations within their communities, most notably racial and ethnic groups and sexual and gender minorities, to create and implement dynamic interventions and initiatives geared to improving health outcomes at the community and individual levels.

Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr of @Columbia shows how the #HIV epidemic spans across different cultural contexts and among various groups of people, meaning diverse strategies are required to effectively address it. #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/TIMZqyFnL3

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Other sessions focus on HIV prevention, Black women’s health, fiscal issues, LGBTQ health equity and much more, including a screening of the documentary Cured, about the time when homosexuality was viewed as a disease that could be treated.

Nkechi Onyewuenyi of @Legacycomm reminds us, “even if we’re only able to help a few people, it’s still an impact, and it still matters!” #SYNC2021 pic.twitter.com/zs7g7Lnvsa

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