Using Artificial Intelligence to Get Homeless Youth Tested for HIV

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Three new grants aim to connect hard-to-reach populations in California to HIV prevention, testing and treatment. Funded by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP), part of the University of California, the grants support programs that target specific populations: homeless youth, black men who have sex with men, and women who face barriers to HIV care because of issues such as domestic violence, poverty and incarceration.

The homeless youth program, according to a CHRP press release, will train peer leaders about HIV, sexual health and communication skills; since the youth don't generally trust adults, it is hoped that these peers will successfully share the knowledge.

In choosing the peer leaders, educators will use what they call "artificial intelligence"—a software program than can identify not the so-called good kids but those with the greatest impact and influence among their peers.

Other projects funded by the CHRP grants also use new technology to overcome health disparities experienced by women, black and Latino men and youth.

In one project, researchers use an app called HealthMindr to reach young men of color who are living with HIV but not keeping appointments at clinics. Through the app—an easy way to reach this population—case managers can help the men navigate issues such as legal problems, employment and housing. The idea is that when these needs are addressed, the men are more likely to go to a doctor.

Another program, called EmPower Women, also uses peer navigators, this time to reach HIV-positive women and offer them advice from other HIV-positive women who have overcome similar challenges, whether it is substance abuse, childcare or domestic violence.

Then there is a project that collaborates with the "house ball community" based in Oakland and consisting mostly of black and Latino men united in an underground fashion and dance scene. Researchers will study the effectiveness of HIV education and prevention efforts being done within the house and ball community.

The CHRP-funded projects are part of UC Centers for AIDS Research in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego. If successful, the projects could expand across California.

To learn about another CHRP-funded projects, read “3 New Studies to Provide and Evaluate PrEP Among Trans People.”

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