AHF Gets Smacked Down by South African AIDS Activists

June 10, 2015 By Peter Staley

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), run by Michael Weinstein, is having a very bad week. AHF's various PrEP positions collided online, as Facebook users noticed their new PrEP-promotion posters in San Francisco (on the left), at the same time they continued their anti-PrEP campaign in Africa, where they got completely smacked down while trying to say PrEP was an impending healthcare disaster (conference poster on the right).

Americans will recognize Weinstein's "healthcare disaster" language, which he's used here in recent years in a failed attempt to thwart PrEP's roll-out. It seems he's thrown in the towel in San Francisco, as the city's HIV infection rate keeps falling at an even faster rate than previous years. Not wanting to miss out on SF's flood of new PrEP prescriptions (and potential Gilead grants!), Weinstein is now pretending to play along with a community that has never been easily fooled.

What the increasingly Duesbergian Weinstein is attempting to do in Africa is even more disgusting. More than 330,000 lives were lost in South Africa between 2000 and 2005, when then president Thabo Mbeki blocked the roll-out of lifesaving AIDS drugs based on an anti-science conspiracy theory called AIDS Denialism (which claims that HIV is not the cause of AIDS). A researcher named Peter Duesberg started the movement back in the 1980's, and AIDS activists have been fighting this scourge ever since.

AHF is now spreading Weinstein's anti-science views about PrEP in Africa, before a single pill has been dispensed. Once again, African lives will be lost because of the anti-science ravings of an arrogant American.

AIDS activists won't be caught off guard this time around, and they just started pushing back hard against AHF. During yesterday's opening session of the 7th South African AIDS Conference, the president of the International AIDS Society, Dr. Chris Beyrer, slammed AHF's "PrEP Denialism" (see the third bullet in his slide below).

By the end of the day, local AIDS activists had issued a strongly worded statement demanding PrEP for South Africans, and trashing AHF's dangerous rhetoric:

> We, South African advocates, are alarmed to see the

AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), an American-based chain clinic and pharmacy that has led the charge in PrEP Denialism, participate at the Durban Aids Conference. The AHF has consistently opposed PrEP using faulty science and fear mongering and has failed to accept extensive research that has clearly and repeatedly shown PrEP to be safe and efficacious. South Africa can only allow evidence-based health policy and implementation. Denialism thrown in the face of facts and research can never be allowed again. As South Africans, we know too well the human cost of misinformation about HIV and of waiting too long to implement life-saving, evidence-based HIV interventions.

By hitting back early, South African AIDS activists have successfully limited any damage Weinstein can cause there. But they should be prepared for the inevitable pivot by AHF-SA. Once grant programs get launched for PrEP, AHF's pro-PrEP posters will quickly follow.

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