The Aliveness Project Opens Minneapolis-Based Thrive HIV Clinic

The Thrive clinic offers free HIV prevention (PrEP) and care services to Minnesotans. A pharmacy will open in the near future.

December 26, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

The Aliveness Project, an HIV community center in Minneapolis, opened its first Thrive clinic in the city, which supports Minnesotans living with and at risk of HIV. In the near future, the clinic will also include a pharmacy.

For nearly 40 years, The Aliveness Project has provided free HIV services to thousands of Minnesotans. Both the Aliveness Project and the Thrive clinic are located near Nicollet Avenue and 38th Street.

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While the Aliveness Project offered people links to HIV resources, the new Thrive clinic provides free HIV support services including HIV testing, counseling and prescriptions for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), medications used by an HIV-negative person to reduce the risk of contracting HIV. Currently, PrEP is available as daily tablets and a long-acting injectable given every two months.

“There are a lot of primary (care) providers who, for whatever reason, are uncomfortable prescribing PrEP, which doesn’t make any sense to me. It’s no different than giving somebody a vaccine you’re preventing,” Thrive clinical services director Matthew Hoppe told the Minnesota Daily. “We eliminate as many barriers as we can. We try to make it as easy as possible and as low cost as can be."

Hoppe said he is the highest-prescribing injectable PrEP provider in the state. What’s more, the clinic already sees between seven to 15 clients a day, whether for various form of PrEP, mental health issues or other reasons.

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Almost 10,000 people in the Minnesota are living with HIV and an additional 1,100 people are unaware of their HIV-positive status, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. In 2023, 324 Minnesotans were diagnosed with HIV, up about 24% from 2022.

What's more, Minnesota is currently experiencing HIV outbreaks in several areas of the state. State officials encourage health care providers to offer HIV testing for those who are at risk.

With one of the largest outreach teams in the state, Thrive Clinic administers about 3,500 HIV tests and identifies about 20 new cases of HIV annually. The clinic also operates a van nicknamed Thrivey that visits three different locals and serves the homeless populations.

"The tools to end HIV are medication for folks living with HIV and PrEP for folks that are not living with HIV," associate director of prevention and clinic operations Joe Franco told The Minnesota Daily. "We essentially have the tools to end HIV and what Matt's doing by expanding services in this community is just allowing people who are HIV negative to stay HIV negative."

Franco refers to the fact that people with HIV who take meds and maintain an undetectable viral load don't transmit HIV to others through sex (dubbed treatment as prevention, or Undetectable Equals Untransmittable or U=U). In addition, HIV-positive people with viral suppression experience slower disease progression, enjoy better overall health are less likely to develop opportunistic illnesses.

In addition to HIV services, the Thrive clinic offers harm reduction testing, syringe kits, wound care and mental health resources.

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The opening of this clinic is especially important because two HIV service providers closed in Minneapolis earlier this year—Rainbow Health and the African American AIDS Task Force.

To read more, click #Access to Care. There, you'll see headlines such as "After Years of Decline, New HIV Cases in NYC Rose in 2023," "Michigan Sets 4 Goals to Reduce HIV Diagnoses by 90%" and "How Climate Change Impacts HIV Treatment."

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