Black HIV Advocates Plan Summit to Address PrEP Disparities

The “PrEP in Black America” summit aims to promote, educate and implement HIV prevention in African-American communities.

July 20, 2022 By Trent Straube

HIV disproportionately affects Black Americans. What’s more, many Black people who could benefit from PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, are not getting prescriptions for the daily pills or long-acting injections that can prevent them from getting HIV.

To address these racial disparities, a group of Black HIV prevention advocates working with PrEP4All are holding a summit titled “PrEP in Black America” in Atlanta on September 13. The goal is to create a plan to promote, educate and implement PrEP in African-American communities.

The announcement of the summit coincides with the 10th anniversary of PrEP. On July 16, 2012, the Food and Drug Administration approved Truvada for PrEP; other drugs have since been approved for HIV prevention. However, PrEP use flounders. (For more, see “A Decade After Approval, PrEP Hasn’t Reached Its Full Potential.”)



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PrEP's low uptake is most pronounced in the Black community. "According to data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC], 91% of Black Americans who can benefit from PrEP have not received a prescription," said Leisha McKinley-Beach, an HIV consultant and advocate based in Atlanta, in a PrEP4All announcement for the summit. "We can't say PrEP is a success until Black America benefits from it."

As PrEP4All notes, CDC data show that Black people accounted for 42% of new HIV diagnoses in 2019, even though they make up only 12.4% of the nation's population. In addition, HIV testing among Black Americans dropped 50% in 2020 compared with the previous year because of COVID-19 shutdowns. (For more about that, see "HIV Testing Fell Steeply During the Early Pandemic.")

"Part of the cause of racial disparities in PrEP use is we've had no large-scale national promotion efforts, doctors who are in our communities aren't talking to their patients about PrEP, and many people think PrEP is too expensive or it's just for gay men," said Kenyon Farrow, managing director of advocacy and organizing with PrEP4All, in the press statement. "We need a national program to address these issues, and we're holding this summit in Atlanta to hear from Black leaders in public health, racial justice groups, civic leaders and people who are on PrEP to devise a plan that will meet the needs of Black folks in America."

"It is widely believed that we now have all the tools necessary to end the HIV epidemic," added Riko Boone, the HIV project director of the Treatment Action Group. "The approval of oral PrEP in 2012 as a tool to prevent HIV was an extraordinary game-changer that should have been scaled up exponentially, particularly to reach populations that carry the disproportionate burden of the epidemic. But, shamefully, that has not been the case. Now, with the recent approval of injectable PrEP, we are in danger of repeating history yet again. As we recognize the 10th year anniversary of oral PrEP's approval, we must recommit to turning the ship of inequity around."

As we commemorate 10 years since the FDA approved PrEP to prevent HIV, find out what advocates are doing to address disparities in PrEP uptake and new HIV diagnoses by visiting https://t.co/bjbWA7rnP3.

#PrEPInBlackAmerica pic.twitter.com/qoeFmKUtNv

— PrEPInBlackAmerica (@PrEPInBlkUS) July 19, 2022

You can learn more about the summit by following the hashtag #PrEPinBlackAmerica. You can also find the group on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

As Danielle M. Campbell, a Los Angeles–based activist and public health professional, said: “It’s time for Black people—leaders, providers, clinicians, researchers, advocates—to lead the effort to ensure that PrEP is an accessible HIV prevention strategy for us, by us.”

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- “Lawyer Who Fought Abortion Rights Takes Aim at HIV Prevention PrEP” and
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And to learn more about PrEP and other ways to prevent HIV, see the POZ Basics on HIV Prevention.

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