Can Black Women Be Convinced That PrEP Isn't Just for Gay Men?

A city campaign wants women to take control of their sexuality and health—and know PrEP is an option.

January 3, 2017

In our nation's capital, nearly 2 percent of residents are living with HIV—one of the highest rates in the country—and one in six people newly infected are Black women. So the city launched a campaign to raise awareness among these women about Truvada as PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, a daily pill to prevent getting HIV.

As the Washington Post reports, although this form of prevention has been gaining traction among gay men in recent years, Black women remain largely unaware of its potential.

"The campaign itself is really about empowering women to take control of their sexuality, control their health and know this is an option for them," LaQuandra Nesbitt, the DC health department director, told the Post.

One of the advantages of PrEP is that it allows women to take charge of their own health instead of relying on men to use a condom or remain HIV negative.

Challenges include adhering to the daily regimen, overcoming stigma associated with PrEP—the idea that people on PrEP are promiscuous—and paying for the med; without insurance or other coverage, a month's supply can cost about $1,000.

To get the word out about PrEP, the city is running ads marketed to Black women using the tagline "Dominate your sex life," and HIV testing sites are offering referrals to doctors who prescribe PrEP. In addition, the Post reports, the Washington AIDS Partnership awarded more than $370,000 to three health centers so they could incorporate PrEP into their care for women, and the MAC AIDS Fund has awarded $1 million to the city's "PrEP for Her" campaign.

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