Gilead to Donate Up to 2.4M Bottles of HIV Prevention Pills Each Year in the U.S.

This will provide free PrEP to as many as 200,000 uninsured Americans until 2030.

May 10, 2019 By Trent Straube

Pharmaceutical giant Gilead Sciences will provide free HIV prevention pills—commonly referred to as PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis—to about 200,000 uninsured Americans each year until 2030. This translates to as many as 2.4 million bottles of tablets annually.

According to a Gilead press release, the medication will be given to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in support of the U.S. Initiative to End the HIV Epidemic, which Trump announced earlier this year in his State of the Union address.

> Great news today: My Administration just secured a historic donation of HIV prevention drugs from Gilead to help expand access to PrEP for the uninsured and those at risk. Will help us achieve our goal of ending the HIV epidemic in America! https://t.co/wux5QasWgW
>
> — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 9, 2019

Gilead manufactures Truvada as PrEP, which is currently the only med approved for HIV prevention. Truvada contains two different drugs: tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF) and emtricitabine. Gilead also makes Descovy, which includes emtricitabine and an updated version of tenofovir (TAF), that is expected to be approved as PrEP by the end of this year. As part of Gilead's agreement with the CDC, it will provide free Truvada and then transition to Descovy once that's

approved. (To learn more about the differences in the two PrEP meds, click here.)

According to a press release from the Department of Health and Human Services, the government's agreement with Gilead will last at least until the end of 2025 and possibly to the end of 2030. Specifically, it will end after 11 years or when a generic version of Descovy becomes available, whichever comes first.

A monthly supply of daily tablets of Truvada costs between $1,600 and $2,000, but many insurance plans, including Medicaid, cover Truvada. Gilead also offers a co-pay card to help defray the cost to consumers. Still, for various reasons, the med has remained out of reach for many people at high risk for HIV, notably gay Black men and transgender women.

"The majority of Americans who are at risk and who could protect themselves with PrEP are still not receiving the medication," said Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar in the HHS press release. "This agreement will help close that gap substantially and deliver on President Trump's promise to end the HIV epidemic in America."

"We are proud to partner with CDC to dramatically expand access to medication that can help prevent new HIV infections," said Gregg Alton, Gilead's chief patient officer, in the company's press release. "We believe today's donation, combined with efforts to address the root causes of the epidemic, such as racism, violence against women, stigma, homophobia and transphobia, can play an important role in ending the HIV epidemic in the United States, particularly in parts of the country with the highest burden of disease."

> This still leaves 1 million vulnerable people in the U.S. (a group larger than the entire population of 6 states and D.C.) with a $2000/month bill for a drug which was developed using taxpayer money. This isn't an "agreement," @SecAzar, it's hush money.
>
> — PrEP4All (@PrEP4AllNow) May 9, 2019

The news of Gilead's donation arrives amid controversy over who owns the patent to Truvada as PrEP—the CDC or Gilead—and amid pressure from AIDS activists for the government to #BreakThePatent on the med. In addition, it was announced this week that Gilead struck a deal with Israeli-based Teva Pharmaceuticals to provide generic Truvada as PrEP in the United States beginning September 2020, a year before the patent expired.

The Washington Post reports that Gilead claims the donation of PrEP is not related to the patent dispute.

Jesse Milan Jr., the president and CEO of AIDS United, tells that newspaper that the Gilead donation "will make a great difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and it will be a tremendous step toward ending the epidemic."

For more about AIDS United's insight, read the group's POZ blog post on the topic titled "Where Will the Bulk of Gilead's PrEP Donations End Up?"

And for related POZ news, click on the following:

- "Generic PrEP to Arrive in September 2020, but Will Big Savings Follow?"
- "Gilead Requests Approval of Descovy for PrEP"
- "CDC Has Patents on PrEP, Advocates Find"
- "What Do We Know About Trump's HIV Plan for America?"

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/gilead-donate-24m-bottles-hiv-prevention-pills-year-us