

HIV Program Turns Hair Salons Into Educational Hot Spots [VIDEO]

A Duke University pilot program trains hairstylists in the South to teach clients about HIV and the use of PrEP for prevention.

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A pilot program is transforming hair salon banter into an opportunity to educate Black women about HIV and the use of [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP) to prevent HIV, according to a [Medscape article](#).

The program is run by the [HEEAT Research Lab](#) at the Duke University School of Nursing. HEEAT, which addresses disparities through engagement, equity, advocacy and trust, recognized that beauty salons and stylists in the Black community play significant a role in the lives of Black women of all ages. Stylists typically converse with clients about topics spanning intimate relationships, home life, health and more.

The program is titled Using PrEP and Doing it for Ourselves (UPDOs) Protective Styles. UPDOs provides hair salon owners and stylists up-to-date information about women's health issues, such as HIV, the use of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to prevent HIV, cardiovascular disease and domestic violence, that they can then share with their clients at salon visits. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force [now recommends all three PrEP options](#) (Truvada and Descovy, which are daily pills, and the injectable Apretude) for people at increased risk for HIV. All three options are [highly effective](#).

Black Americans account for only 13% of the U.S. population, but Black women make up about 64% of all new HIV diagnoses among U.S. women, according to principal investigator Schenita Randolph, PhD, MPH, RN, an associate professor at Duke University's nursing school. What's more, HIV prevalence is highest in the South, where a majority of Black Americans live, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reports.

"Building community partnerships with trusted venues and gatekeepers, such as beauty salon stylists, is one strategy to overcome the barriers to PrEP uptake, including stigma, trust and access," Randolph told Medscape.

The [UPDOs initiative](#) trains stylists through entertaining educational videos that help them connect Black women to [HIV testing](#) and counseling and PrEP referrals.

Here's one of the UPDO videos from the HEEAT Research Lab:

According to Medscape, more than 100 people have been recruited to participate in the pilot program, and 44 of those had pretest and post-test scores for researchers to analyze. Results showed that the project helped increase participants' knowledge and awareness of PrEP. What's more, interpersonal stigma surrounding PrEP use declined.

Experts involved in the program emphasized that culturally relevant nurse-led interventions have great potential not only to improve awareness and PrEP uptake among Black women but also strengthen community relations.

Rasheeta Chandler, PhD, RN, an associate professor at Emory University's Hell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, told Medscape that she was "excited to see a resurrection in the use of community-specific venues that are a staple for Black women.

"There's a level of trust that has to be there for you to let people into that level of personal space of yours, especially if you've been going to that person for a number of years," Chandler added. "So I think it's a great approach to the topic and demystifying it and allowing women to be able to talk about their sexuality in a way that is not judgmental or stigmatizing."

The HEEAT Lab plans to share key elements of the UPDOs project with others via an online tool kit that will include videos for clinicians, community-based organizations, stylists and beauty salons to use and adapt.

"There's just some elements of Black culture that translate across every region, and the salon is one of those settings that has a similar vibe whether it's in New York or Georgia or North Carolina," Chandler said. "You're going to have that relationship in the same way no matter what region you are in."

For related articles in POZ, see:

- ["PrEP, a Key HIV Prevention Tool, Isn't Reaching Black Women,"](#)
- ["Expanding PrEP Coverage in the U.S. to Help End the HIV Epidemic"](#) and
- ["PrEP Peer Educators Help Prevent HIV on Black Campuses."](#)