“I Matter Therefore I PrEP” to Prevent HIV Among Latinos and Black Americans

An East Harlem HIV prevention campaign focuses on Black and Latino New Yorkers at higher risk.

April 2, 2021 By Trent Straube

The Boriken Neighborhood Health Center of East Harlem launched an HIV prevention campaign titled “I Matter Therefore I PrEP,” a reference to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a daily pill that HIV-negative people can take to prevent contracting HIV.

The campaign targets Black and Latino men ages 20 to 39 and Black women ages 30 to 49 and is a response to research showing that the rate of new HIV diagnoses in East Harlem is two times that of the rest of New York City, according to 2018 data from the city health department. What’s more, Black women accounted for 60% of new HIV cases among women in New York City. In general, Black and Latino men who have sex with men are at higher risk for HIV compared with other gay and bisexual men.

A bus ad from the “I Matter Therefor I PrEP” campaign in East HarlemCourtesy of the Boriken Neighborhood Health Center

“Boriken’s ‘I Matter Therefore…’ campaign supports the three goals of the [New York state] campaign to end AIDS,” said Adam Aponte, MD, the chief medical officer of the Boriken Neighborhood Health Center in the center’s press release. “It aims to identify persons with HIV who remain undiagnosed through testing, retain persons with HIV in health care to help them suppress their viral load, and facilitate access to PrEP to help keep at-risk persons HIV negative. The tone, message and models of the campaign truly represent our community and help take away the stigma about HIV.”

Scientists estimate PrEP to be about 99% effective among men who have sex with men and 88% to 90% among heterosexual men and women (though researchers believe the latter number is likely higher). For more details, see "How Well Do U=U and PrEP Work? The CDC Updates Its Answers."

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In the United States, PrEP is available as the daily tablets Truvada and Descovy; both are manufactured by Gilead Sciences and consist of two meds. A generic version of Truvada became available last fall. To learn more, see "What's the Difference Between Truvada and Descovy for PrEP?" and "Prevention: Generic Truvada." For more general information, see the POZ Basics on HIV Prevention.

The Boriken Neighborhood Health Center serves a population that experiences higher HIV rates as well as more poverty and lower education. To boost its HIV efforts, the center recently hired a new HIV services coordinator, Paul Bolter. In addition to HIV services, the center offers bilingual, culturally appropriate comprehensive health, medical and dental services for the populations it serves in East Harlem.

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The “I Matter Therefore I PrEP” campaign appears on social media, buses and other local venues.

In related news, HIV organization Iris House, which mostly serves women in East and Central Harlem and the South Bronx, recently launched an HIV campaign. For details, see “#BeGlowedAF: Young People Encourage Peers to Get Tested for HIV and Hepatitis C.”

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