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Brigham and Women’s Hospital HIV Vaccine Trials Unit: Using Research to Engage Communities in HIV Prevention

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Who we are
A unit of physicians, nurses and research staff performing clinical trials research in order to find a safe and effective HIV vaccine. We strive to:
- Increase the visibility of our HIV vaccine research studies within the Boston community as:
  - Educational resource
  - Community advocate
  - Clinical research site
- Promote our academic and humanitarian mission through:
  - Leading and contributing to discussions about HIV
  - Making connections within scientific, student, and activist communities

Our collaborators include:
- Scientific/research partners:
  - Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC)
  - Fenway Health
  - HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN)
  - International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI)
- The Ragon Institute
- Division of AIDS (DAIDS) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Community partners:
- AIDS Action Committee
- Breakthrough
- Boston Public Health Commission
- Boston Medical Center
- Boston University School of Public Health
- Harvard Center for AIDS Research (CFAR)
- Harvard Institute for Global Health
- Latino Health Institute
- Male Center
- Multicultural AIDS Coalition-Boston
- TransCEND

Our “T” Matters Campaign
- Focus on transgender women
- Creation of trans-specific ads with local members of the transgender community

My “T” Matters Campaign
- Focus group held in early 2011: exploring barriers and facilitators to participation in clinical trials/vaccine research
- Feedback from the participants highlighted a need for community:
  - “I honestly know nothing about how these vaccines work. I understand the reason why they’re doing them. I just don’t understand how they work.”

Transgender women focus group
- CDC cites transgender communities as among the groups at highest risk for infection in US
- Meta-analysis of 29 studies suggested that 27.7% of transgender women are HIV-positive
- One study found that up to 73% of HIV-positive transgender women were unaware of their HIV status

Engaging the community
- Plan and attend events that focus on raising awareness about HIV/AIDS in general community and events that target scientific community
- Where there are gaps in programming, create our own HIV vaccine awareness/recruitment campaigns
- Collaborating with group leaders in your community of interest allows you to:
  - Establish connections
  - Learn about current issues within the community
  - Find legitimacy and support for your efforts
- Access and engage community members in a meaningful way
- Support organizations that address HIV-related issues: LGBT rights, domestic violence, health disparities
- Online canvassing through use of social media: Facebook, Craigslist, college websites

Source: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/transgender/