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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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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 an:
  - 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
  - Bournemouth
  - Boston Public Health Commission
  - Boston Medical Center
  - Boston University School of Public Health
  - Harvard Center for AIDS Research (CHART)
  - Harvard Institute for Global Health
  - Latino Health Institute
  - Male Center
  - Multicultural AIDS Coalition-Boston
  - TransCEND

My “T” Matters Campaign

- Focus on transgender women
- Creation of trans-specific ads with local members of the transgender community

Transgender women focus group

- 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 and HIV

- 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 pertinent 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: GLBT rights, domestic violence, health disparities
- Online canvassing through use of social media: Facebook, Craigslist, college websites

Outreach Challenges

- Mistakes:
  - Government investigators
  - Stigma
  - Associated with HIV
  - Associated with vaccine
  - Health concern
  - Contracting HIV
  - Ineligibility for vaccine that works
  - Vaccine-induced permanent hearing (WHI)
  - Health insurance
  - International travel
  - Immigration
  - Blood donation

FACT: You cannot get HIV from participating in an HIV Vaccine Research Study.

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