



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 26, 2015

### **Hawaii State Department of Health Taking Action to Reduce New HIV Cases in Hawaii**

#### **Patients Should Consult with Their Physicians on Prescriptions to HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)**

HONOLULU – Between 2008 and 2012, there were 456 new HIV cases diagnosed in Hawaii: 77 percent on Oahu and the remainder on the neighbor islands. Approximately 85 percent of HIV cases in Hawaii occur in men. By the end of 2011, there was an estimated 2,200 persons living with HIV in Hawaii.

The Hawaii State Department of Health is taking action to reduce new cases of HIV in the state. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a prescription HIV medication that can be prescribed to uninfected individuals who are at high risk for HIV infection to prevent them from becoming infected. PrEP is marketed under the trade name Truvada.

“PrEP is high-impact HIV prevention. Never before has there been a medication that can help prevent HIV infection,” said Peter Whiticar, Chief of the STD AIDS Prevention Branch of the Hawaii State Department of Health. “It’s important to not only care for our ohana who are living with HIV, but also to help prevent transmission to others. PrEP provides another viable means of prevention.”

“The Department of Health highly recommends the use of PrEP as an important option to prevent HIV transmission among high-risk individuals, but the decision to use PrEP should be made in collaboration with a medical care provider,” Whiticar added. His branch recently

released guidelines on the use of PrEP for HIV prevention to Hawaii's healthcare providers, keeping pace with national trends.

Physicians and clinics nationally are starting to offer PrEP to patients who are at high risk of HIV infection. PrEP combined with other effective HIV prevention methods will both prevent HIV infection in an individual and reduce HIV transmission in the population.

In July 2012, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a once-daily pill, marketed under the trade name "Truvada", after extensive research in adults supported its use as PrEP. Truvada's ® effectiveness to prevent HIV compared with no treatment was found to be up to 92 percent in studies, provided the medication was taken daily. Its effectiveness dropped substantially when the medication was not taken daily. Condoms should be used with PrEP to be totally safe.

In addition to PrEP, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is another HIV prevention method. PEP is different from PrEP in that PEP involves taking anti-HIV medications soon after exposure to HIV. PEP works to reduce the chance of becoming HIV positive after exposure to the virus by keeping HIV from making copies of itself and spreading throughout the body.

Most health insurance companies in Hawaii cover Truvada® for PrEP. Individuals who want to learn more about PrEP should speak with their medical provider to obtain detailed information on pre-requisite tests and follow-up. Patients and providers can also learn more at the STD AIDS Prevention Branch website at:

<http://health.hawaii.gov/std-aids/hiv-aids/pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep/>

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