HEAT Programs

PrEP and PEP Services at STAR and HEAT Programs

An estimated 50,000 individuals become infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the United States annually. A new prevention strategy, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), is intended for high-risk populations to reduce their risk of becoming infected with HIV. PrEP includes daily medication and routine follow-up. When used consistently, PrEP is shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection. If delivered effectively and used in combination with other proven prevention methods, PrEP may play a significant role in helping to address the HIV epidemic in the United States. The widespread implementation of PrEP is one of the cornerstones of Governor Cuomo’s blueprint to end the status of AIDS as an epidemic in New York State by 2020.

Post-exposure prophylaxis or PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis. It involves taking antiretroviral medicines as soon as possible (preferably less than 36 hours), but generally no more than 72 hours (3 days) after one may have been exposed to HIV, to try to reduce the chance of becoming HIV-positive. These medicines keep HIV from making copies of itself and spreading through the body. Two pills are usually prescribed, and they must be taken for 28 days. PEP is not always effective; it does not guarantee that someone exposed to HIV will not become infected with HIV.

Both the STAR Health Center (SHC) and the Health and Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT) Programs at SUNY Downstate follow NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute PrEP/PEP guidelines and offer them as part of a comprehensive prevention plan including risk-reduction counseling, free condoms, sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, and mental health and substance use screening. When PEP/PrEP is indicated, the physician provides the client with an initial assessment and treatment with monthly monitoring for HIV status, adherence, and side effects, followed by monitoring every three months.

The SHC initially began providing PrEP/PEP to HIV negative partners of HIV positive SHC clients. Recently SHC began actively publicizing PrEP/PEP services to the public using two professionally designed PrEP brochures (one targets men who have sex with men (MSM) and a second targets heterosexual couples). Referrals for PrEP at the SHC can be made by calling 718-270-3745.

HEAT’s PrEP services are built into routine HIV testing services that it provides at community partner sites (e.g., Brooklyn & Medgar Evers Colleges, Hetrick-Martin Institute, Community Counseling & Mediation Services). Clients who mention high-risk sexual activity during HIV testing are informed about PrEP services; a HEAT staff member contacts interested clients to provide more detailed information on PrEP benefits, answers all questions, and then schedules the client for screening and medical assessment. Potential clients attend HEAT-sponsored community events and young PLWHA discuss PrEP benefits within their social networks. HEAT recently developed a promotional PrEP/PEP video played on monitors around SUNY-DMC.

The HEAT Program is currently involved in a targeted pilot project, in conjunction with the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute, to identify needed resources to implement routine use of PrEP and establish a foundation for statewide implementation of PrEP as part of a comprehensive prevention plan. While HEAT will offer PrEP to any adolescent or young adult below the age of 25 years, the project has targeted interest in addressing the prevention needs of MSM and transgender women, two groups who have the highest rates of new HIV infections. As an adolescent/young adult program, HEAT is well situated to engage this population and learn about the challenges of PrEP implementation. Many issues such as insurance status, lack of parental consent in minors and confidentiality around sexual identity and behavior among youth have already been identified as challenges to be considered in offering PrEP to HEAT’s younger population. Referrals for PrEP at HEAT can be made by calling 718-467-4446.

For the inaugural issue of STAR Community Link, we are focusing on the Health and Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT) Program, directed by Jeffrey Bimbaum, MD, MPH. HEAT is the STAR Program’s counterpart serving HIV+ and at risk youth and young adults. HEAT’s adolescent-focused, single-site, “one stop shopping” model provides comprehensive, age appropriate, culturally competent HIV care and supportive services for heterosexual and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, most of whom are Black and Latino. Services include outreach, HIV testing and linkage to care, HIV primary medical and mental health care, supportive services, and access to clinical research; all provided by an interdisciplinary team. STAR and HEAT collaborate to provide many services to HIV+ women and their families, especially those involving pregnancy and follow up of HIV exposed newborns as well as a well-established program for transitioning HIV+ youth from HEAT into adult care at STAR. STAR also provides enhanced data systems support to HEAT.
**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**SUNY Global Health Institute**

The SUNY Global Health Institute (GHI) was designed to create a virtual infrastructure within SUNY where faculty and students who concentrate on global health, from across the SUNY system, can find opportunities for research, education, and consultation. Jack A. DeHovitz, MD, MPH, STAR Program Director and distinguished service professor at SUNY Downstate, led the creation of the GHI with co-director Gene D. Morse, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, associate director of the New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences at the University at Buffalo.

The field of global health focuses on health issues with trans-national or worldwide impact.

Because it involves many different disciplines, this area is ripe for collaboration, says Dr. DeHovitz. "When opportunities come forward for research, education, etc., the GHI allows us to draw upon colleagues in other disciplines who may be at other institutions."

GHI’s conference on October 27-28, 2014 was the organization’s first major activity. Funded by a grant from the SUNY 4E (Energy, Environment, Economics, Education) Network of Excellence, the meeting, at the SUNY Global Center in Manhattan, drew about 50 participants. They included delegates from SUNY’s four medical schools (at the University at Buffalo, Upstate Medical University, Downstate Medical Center and Stony Brook University), plus the School of Optometry, the School of Public Health at the University at Albany and SUNY Polytechnic Institute. Following this successful inaugural conference, the SUNY GHI has facilitated the development of multiple research projects and funding applications to two of SUNY’s Networks of Excellence from several teams of researchers who met at the conference.

The GHI is currently developing a portal for information on educational programs in global health, and a list of funded research projects on SUNY campuses. Members are also planning a second conference, to be held in the fall of 2015. Among the many roles SUNY can fill in the global health arena is the role of partner in capacity-building—helping organizations obtain equipment and develop systems they need to implement new advances in health care, says Dr. Morse. “It’s important for SUNY to realize its potential to jump in front and become a global leader. For more information on SUNY GHI, please visit http://tprc.pharm.buffalo.edu/home/sunyglobal.

**FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES**

**Elliot DeHaan, MD** joined the STAR Program in 2014 as Clinical Assistant Professor and STAR Health Center clinician. He was recently named the SHC’s Director of HCV Services. He earned his MD at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and his Bachelor of Arts in Biomedical Sciences and Engineering at Harvard University. Dr. DeHaan was trained in infectious diseases at NYU Medical Center and while there researched outcomes of anal cytologies from their HIV Clinic which was presented at the International AIDS Conference in 2012. Dr. DeHaan is board certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases. Dr. DeHaan developed the SHC’s protocols on PrEP and has provided the service in the SHC for the past year. He also provides of hormone therapy for transgender clients. Prior to joining STAR, Dr. DeHaan served as Associate Medical Director for HIV Services/Infectious Diseases at Community Healthcare Network (CHN), a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that spans 11 clinics in the NYC area.

**Pascal DuBois** joined the Adolescent Education Program (AEP) as a Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Health Educator in December 2014. He earned his BBA in International Marketing at Pace University and completed post undergraduate work at Hunter College’s School of Public Health. Prior to joining the AEP, Mr. DuBois worked on the NYC Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2013 (NYC HANES); Power To Heal, a documentary film centered on the civil rights era; and as a Preconception Peer Educator at the March of Dimes. He is currently enrolled in pre-med studies at Brooklyn College and hopes to attend Downstate’s College of Medicine.

**Renisha Pierre, MSW, CAPP-PREP Prevention Specialist at the Adolescent Education Program,** was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the prestigious academic society. Ms. Pierre received a Bachelor’s degree in social work and sociology in May, 2014 from McCauley’s Honor College at Lehman College and a Master of Social Work from Hunter College in May 2015.

**Georgene Servio, LPN** joined the STAR Program’s HCV team as the Linkage to Care Specialist, having transitioned from Adherence Services. In her new role, Ms. Servio will work with current STAR HIV/HCV coinfected patients and link coinfected patients to care at STAR from within the community. She will provide HCV education and treatment adherence services and will coordinate HCV care services for all coinfected patients.

**Gabriel Rebick, MD** joined the STAR Health Center in August 2014 as Clinical Assistant Professor and STAR Health Center clinician. Dr. Rebick received his medical degree from McGill University, and underwent training in internal medicine at Weill Cornell Medical Center-New York Presbyterian Hospital. He completed infectious diseases specialty training at the University of Toronto, and is board certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases. Dr. Rebick obtained a Master of Public Health at Harvard School of Public Health, with a focus on quantitative methods. While at Harvard he studied the interaction between HIV and food insecurity, work which was recently presented at the meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. At SHC Dr. Rebick supervises the anal cancer screening program, co-leads the quality improvement program, and is active in the HRSA funded SUNY AIDS Education and Training Center (AETC) and the HIV Residency program.

**Brittney Watford, BS,** joined the STAR Program’s Care Coordination team as a Patient Navigator in December 2014. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Advertising from the College of New Rochelle. Prior to joining STAR, she worked with formerly incarcerated men, individuals with substance use disorders, and homeless youth. She is dedicated to working with disenfranchised people who have chronic medical conditions.

**Amelia Williams** joined the HEAT Program in 2014 as the Young Women’s Peer Outreach Worker. She provides outreach, patient navigation and prevention interventions to young women of color in Brooklyn. In addition, she provides sexual health workshops at Brooklyn middle and high schools and help to plan and implement large HIV testing events for young women.

---

**http://**

**tprc.pharm.buffalo.edu/home/sunyglobal.**
SUNY Downstate Medical Center’s **Special Treatment and Research (STAR) Program** has received three funding awards totaling nearly $4.6 million to provide HIV care and ancillary services, supportive counseling and family stabilization services, and care for individuals co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV). The first award is a two-year Early Intervention Services (EIS) award of $2,840,346 in continuation funding from the Ryan White Part C Program of HRSA’s HIV/AIDS Bureau. This award will help STAR to address the three goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy: 1) reduce the number of people who become infected with HIV; 2) increase access to care and optimize health outcomes for people living with HIV and AIDS; and 3) reduce HIV-related health disparities.

The second award, $1,050,000 over three years, is continuation funding from Ryan White Part A for the Supportive Counseling and Family Stabilization (SCF) Project. The SCF Project, a component of the STAR Program’s Behavioral Health Services, was one of the first projects to offer care to people with HIV/AIDS at SUNY Downstate and the first of its kind in Brooklyn, providing comprehensive support group services and supportive counseling to adults with HIV/AIDS and their family members since 1989. The SCF Project, funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009, Part A, will build on STAR’s previous model by adding multi-level staff, including case managers and community healthcare workers; providing appointment accommodation; and providing home visits to reach those most in need.

The third award, $675,000 over five years from the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute, is to improve linkage and access to hepatitis C (HCV) care and treatment. This program will link individuals who are dually infected with HIV and HCV, including uninsured persons, to comprehensive care and treatment at the STAR Health Center. On-site services will include linkage to care, HCV care/treatment, nutritional services, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, adherence support, peer support and other supportive services. Collaborating partners include SUNY Downstate University Hospital’s Center for Liver Disease, a component of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, and CAMBA, a Brooklyn-based community organization serving persons with or at risk for HCV.

The **HEAT Program** received $15,000 from the Elton John AIDS Foundation to launch its **House Calls** Project which brings STD screening (gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis) targeting young men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender youth of color into the community. HEAT provides ongoing STD screening at the Hetrick-Martin Institute as well as at Ballroom, HIV testing events and House Ball meetings.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

Eastwood EA, Fletcher J, Quinliniv EB, Verdecias N, Birbaum JM, Blank AE. Baseline social characteristics and barriers to care from a special projects of national significance women of color with HIV study: a comparison of urban and rural women and barriers to HIV care. AIDS Patient Care STDS. 2015 Jan;29 Suppl 1:54-10.


(continued on p. 4)