

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV Prevention

It is the position of The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) that:

- PrEP should be offered, available, and readily accessible to any person who desires it.
- PrEP education should be included in academic curricula for all healthcare professions and healthcare students who are able to educate about PrEP, prescribe PrEP, and/or manage PrEP.
- Nurses must advocate for equal access to PrEP in marginalized communities, geographically isolated locations, and other resource-limited settings.
- Policies surrounding PrEP must be culturally appropriate and support equitable access to PrEP.

Statement of Concern:

PrEP has the potential to help end the HIV epidemic; yet as of 2022, in the United States only 36% of the 1.2 million people who would benefit from PrEP were prescribed this medication. This percentage is a 13% increase from 2019, but persons who are disproportionately affected by HIV continue to face individual, social, and structural barriers that hinder PrEP access and uptake. These multifactorial barriers create disparities in PrEP use across racial, ethnic, sex, and age groups. These disparities must be addressed by nurses and other healthcare professionals using a variety of patient and community-centered, evidence-based approaches.

Background:

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is an effective, evidence-based intervention to prevent acquisition of new HIV cases in persons who have a greater likelihood of acquiring HIV. Although the number of new HIV diagnoses has declined in recent years, HIV is still a public health concern with nearly 31,800 new transmissions happening in the United States annually. This is down 12% from 2018, with a 30% drop among young people, and PrEP, in addition to viral suppression and HIV testing likely contributed to the decline. However, this decrease in acquisitions was not uniformly distributed across demographic groups. Though PrEP is a very effective at reducing new cases of HIV from sex by 99%, there is still limited access and slow uptake of PrEP among Black and Brown communities, women, members of the transgender community and communities in the South and rural areas.

Structural barriers that impact PrEP access among various vulnerable populations include gaps in coverage for PrEP related services such as limited Medicaid expansion among Southern states with high PrEP related needs and inadequate training of healthcare staff. These barriers result in low PrEP knowledge, comfort, confidence, and awareness among those able to promote and/or prescribe PrEP. Individual and social barriers include sex-based stigma leading to low perceived risk for HIV and need for PrEP, perceived medication side effects, partner reactions among women, and medical mistrust which all interfere with PrEP uptake. Nurses can increase PrEP uptake by advocating for patients who could benefit from PrEP and decreasing HIV-related stigma in the communities they serve.

Overcoming barriers to PrEP access and uptake requires the implementation of multilevel interventions that focus on investing in the education of persons vulnerable to HIV and the healthcare professionals who care for them. It also requires improving equity and quality of PrEP services through policy and reform to better meet the needs and goals of vulnerable populations.

Policy in Action: ANAC members and others can support this position by taking these individual and/or collective actions:

- Initiate discussions with patients about PrEP during visits
- Engage colleagues and the public in discussions about PrEP
- Integrate comprehensive PrEP training and education in the curriculum
- Implement PrEP uptake strategies at their/your institution
- Partner with local or national organizations that advocate for PrEP
- Encourage your organization to sign on to letters advocating PrEP access for all
- Write letters to editors,
- Meet with/call/email your state legislators and other key decision makers.
- Reference this link for to the ANAC Advocacy toolkit other ways to advocate for PrEP
 - [www.nursesinaidscare.org/files/2023%20Attachments/ANAC Advocacy Toolkit.pdf](http://www.nursesinaidscare.org/files/2023%20Attachments/ANAC%20Advocacy%20Toolkit.pdf)

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The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) is the leading nursing organization responding to HIV/AIDS and related co-morbidities and co-occurring conditions globally. Founded in 1987, our mission is to promote the education and development of nurses and others involved in the delivery of health care to persons living with or affected by HIV and to promote the health and welfare of people living with HIV/AIDS around the world.