Getting to Zero Among Black MSM in the U.S. South

The HIV epidemic in the U.S. continues to be marked by geographic, racial, sexual, and gender disparities. According to the latest estimates from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. South experiences the highest rate of new HIV cases and the highest rate of HIV-related deaths in the country. In addition, higher HIV diagnosis rates have been seen in Southern Black men who have sex with men (MSM). To help address this disparity, HPTN 096, a community-randomized trial, will assess an integrated, HIV status-neutral, population-based approach designed to reduce HIV incidence among
Black MSM in the U.S. South by increasing HIV testing, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) use among Black MSM living without HIV, and viral suppression rates among Black MSM living with HIV.

The first HPTN 084-01 study abstract, “In the Face of a Global Pandemic and Social Barriers, Cisgender Female Adolescents Enroll in HIV Prevention Trial HPTN 084-01 in Sub-Saharan Africa,” was accepted as an oral presentation at the upcoming International Workshop on HIV & Adolescence. HPTN 084-01 (The LIFT Study) is a clinical trial examining whether injectable cabotegravir for pre-exposure prophylaxis is safe and acceptable for adolescent females assigned female at birth. LIFT enrolled study participants at sites in South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.
Pamela Thandeka Tshandu, an HPTN 083-01 and HPTN 084-01 protocol team member, is a community liaison officer at Wits RHI in Johannesburg. Her work focuses on promoting the inclusion of all populations in HIV/AIDS prevention research, ensuring clinical trials are innovative, efficient, and timely. The merging of her research experience and advocacy expertise comes into play when she brings forth community concerns to the researchers, making sure their voices are heard.

As a community liaison officer, she oversees community and stakeholder engagement, maintaining good retention in studies. Tshandu is particularly passionate about stakeholder engagement; it offers her the platform to educate communities on the latest research developments. She recently co-authored the HPTN-084-01 abstract entitled "In the Face of a Global Pandemic and Social Barriers, Cisgender Female Adolescents Enrolled in HIV Prevention Trial HPTN 084-1 in Sub-Saharan Africa." The abstract was recently accepted as an oral presentation at the 2021 International Workshop on HIV & Adolescence.

**What attracted you to a career in HIV prevention research?**

I am passionate about women's issues and believe their voices get silenced. Plus, more women than men acquire HIV. Women must be educated and empowered in sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV prevention.


What would you like to see from our newsletters? Please e-mail us with your thoughts and ideas at news@hptn.org.

Copyright © 2021 The HIV Prevention Trials Network, All rights reserved.