



The Network

JANUARY 2015

11

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HIV in 2015: What are the Possibilities?

Adapted from TheBody.com

With 2014 settled behind us, we know focus on what's to come in this new year full of fresh possibility.

According to Mr. Vergel, a frequent HIV/AIDS conference attendee on behalf of TheBody.com, here's what people are excited about in 2015:

- PrEP, or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, will become increasingly available in 2015 as more patient assistance is offered throughout the US. As more HIV-negative folks start to use PrEP, the stigma surrounding its use will diminish.
- HIV aging activism will continue to spread as growing numbers of mature folks living with HIV
- experience health and support challenges.
- As states legalize same-sex marriage, more HIV positive people will be able to get on their spouses health insurance plans which wasn't possible before.
- The decriminalization of HIV will continue throughout the US as efforts increase to stop the unjust criminalization and jailing of individuals living with HIV.
- More single pill and once-a-day combination regimens will become available as pharmaceutical companies learn to collaborate.

- Social Media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, will continue to grow as tools to help us mobilize, share information, and connect with each other as we progress towards our unified goals.



The ASN Housing staff are actively recruiting landlords interested in learning more about the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.

We have several clients who are seeking rentals willing to accept these HCVs.

For more information, please call 805-781-3660 and speak with Elena.



Cost of Hep C Drug Treatments Still High...

... **But it's ok.**
We're here to help.

The world of Hep C is bursting with good news recently as life-changing treatments with few side-effects and an over 90% cure rate have emerged onto the market since December 2013.

These new drug regimens are not only tolerable with shorter treatment periods, but they

completely eradicate the virus from the body!

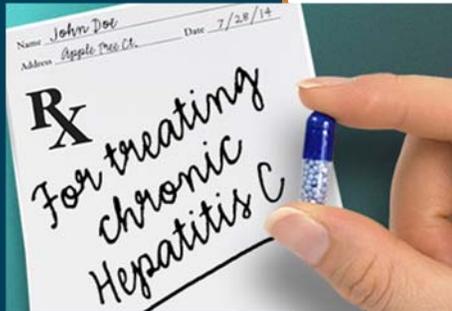
That being said, the soaring cost of these drugs remain a barrier to obtaining treatment. Even with health insurance coverage, many of these regimens will only be authorized for coverage by insurance companies if the person requesting them is seriously ill, i.e. people living with liver disease.

The good news is that more treatment options are coming which means more competitive prices!

Here at the SLO Hep C Project, we are excited to report that we have successfully aided at least 10 people through this process, with more on the horizon! We've even seen a handful cured of the virus.

Even if you can't access these treatments immediately, we'll help keep you healthy until you can.

Don't wait and get tested for Hep C as soon as possible! No matter the result, you're not alone. Call us for more info on where you can get tested! 805-781-3660



"...This enrollment period applies to folks enrolling in the Covered CA marketplace and the private market, so don't hesitate and make sure you're coverage is secure!"

Covered California: Open Enrollment Ends Feb. 15!

One of the most important things we can do to keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy is to make sure to get covered!

The current open enrollment period ends on Sunday, February 15th!

Keep in mind that this enrollment period applies to folks enrolling in the Covered CA marketplace (including Medi-Cal) and the private

market, so don't hesitate and make sure you're coverage is secure!

All Covered CA plans include the ten essential core health benefits, including emergency, mental health, & preventative services, maternity & newborn care, and prescriptions. And you can't be denied for a pre-existing condition.

Remember that you can change your plan

outside of the open enrollment period if, during the year, you experience a life event, such as getting married or a change in your employment status. Otherwise, now is the time!

Call us if you have any questions about how you can get covered!



COVERED CALIFORNIA

Your support and the support of local community members and businesses are vital to our continuing ability to provide comprehensive services to our growing number of clients. There are many ways that you can make a generous donation!

- **Money:** ALL MONEY DONATED TO THE ASN IS TAX DEDUCTABLE & REMAINS IN THIS COMMUNITY to help SLO County residents in their struggle with HIV/AIDS and Hep C.
- **Time:** One of the most important ways the SLO community supports the ASN is through the gift of time. Our volunteer program offers opportunities to directly assist clients and help keep the agency streamlined.
- **Food:** ASN's Food Party is always in need of the basics. If you would like to hold a food drive, or donate food directly, we have a list of suggestions for you!

You will make a difference! Contact us, or visit ASN.org, for more details!

**You Can
 Make a
 Difference!**

PrEP Q&A: Just the Facts

Adapted from "[PrEP Facts](#)" by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation

- **What exactly is PrEP?**- PrEP is an HIV prevention strategy that involves taking an anti-HIV medication before coming to contact with HIV to reduce the risk of being infected. PrEP does not protect against any other STIs and is meant to be used alongside other safe-sex practices.

- **How effective is PrEP?**- Results of several clinical studies show that people who regularly take Truvada, the name of the drug used as PrEP, reduced their HIV risk by more than 90%! It's vital to the effectiveness to take Truvada every day consistently, otherwise that level of protection may decrease.

- **Are there any side-effects?**- Some people experience mild nausea, headaches, or weightloss for the first 4-8 weeks of taking PrEP. However, these went away after the first few weeks of treatment for most people using PrEP. Truvada is not known to interact with alcohol, most medications for depression, hormonal therapy, and shouldn't effect sexual performance. Though long-term side-effects are still unknown, significant data has been accumulated on the drug's safety. As with any medication, it's important to speak with your doctor before starting PrEP.

- **Should condoms still be worn?**- Condoms are still the only tool that protects against both HIV and certain STIs, and prevents pregnancy when used correctly and consistently. PrEP

provides additional protection against HIV and is an important part of the complete safer-sex toolbox.

- **Where can I get PrEP?**- First, talk with your primary care physician or other medical care provider about using PrEP. You'll need to speak with

them about your sexual health and will need to take an HIV test before starting PrEP. *If you need help getting PrEP in SLO County, call us! 805-781-3660*

- **What about drug resistance?**- Studies have shown that Truvada only creates HIV drug resistance if the person using it was previously infected with HIV. This is one of the reasons why an HIV test is required before anyone starts using

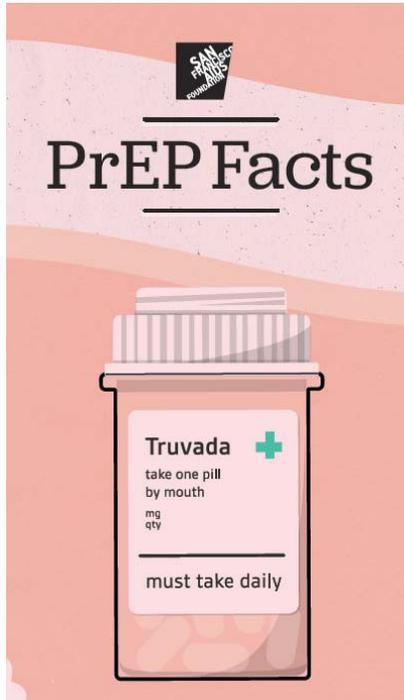
PrEP, and why regular HIV testing is required while on it.

- **How much does it cost?**- As of January 2015, Truvada is a brand-name drug with no available generic alternatives. Thankfully, most health insurance plans, including Medi-Cal, do cover PrEP, though the cost varies depending on that coverage. Gilead, Truvada's manufacturer, also has assistance programs. While on PrEP, you should take into account not only the cost of the drug itself, but also frequent doc visits and lab tests, most of which are covered.

- **What if my medical provider is uncomfortable prescribing PrEP?**- Show them "[PrEP Facts](#)" by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation! If that doesn't help, ask for a referral to an HIV specialist or call us! There are medical providers here in SLO who are comfortable and willing to prescribe and maintain the regular visits and lab tests required to use PrEP. **Contact us for help in getting started!**

- **Who should consider taking PrEP?**- Individuals who either sometimes or never use condoms; anyone who has been diagnosed with an STI in the past 6 months; HIV-negative people in a relationship with someone HIV-positive; anyone who has used stimulants, poppers, cocaine, meth, ecstasy (molly), or GHB in the last 6 months; and, women who want to safely have a child with an HIV-positive partner.

- **I'm a medical provider and I'd like to start making PrEP available to my patients. Where can I find the applicable billing codes?**- You're in luck! Click [HERE](#) for a comprehensive list of useful billing codes!



FREE HIV Testing at ASN

The ASN offers FREE confidential HIV testing every week!

WEDNESDAYS:
1pm to 4:pm

FRIDAYS:
11am to 3pm

Come and see us!

#Follow Us!



facebook.com/asnslo



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@ASNSLO



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San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

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1320 Nipomo St.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Phone: 805-781-3660

800-491-9141

Fax: 805-781-3664

The San Luis Obispo County AIDS Support Network remains the sole community-based, non-profit organization in this county that provides supportive services to residents living with HIV disease & AIDS, and their families and friends.

The SLO Hep C Project is dedicated to meeting the needs of people living with hepatitis C and increasing public awareness through educational outreach in SLO County.

The agency strives to improve the quality of life and independence of its clients by providing support on an individual basis.

Learn more at ASN.org & SLOHepC.org

Upcoming Events & Opportunities!

We are proud to offer our community a wide variety of **volunteer opportunities**. You're sure to find one that's perfect for you!

Front Desk Volunteer:

Our front desk volunteers are the back bone of the office. They direct phone calls, greet incoming clients, help with distributing food from our pantry, and overall help to keep us sane! We love, LOVE, our front desk volunteers!

Direct Client Services:

There is always a need for a variety of services, including companionship, meal delivery & preparation, housekeeping, gardening, transportation for medical visits or groceries, pet care, and other invaluable services.

Contact us for more details!



Upcoming Events:

SAVE THE DATE!: March 19th

25th Annual AIDS Update Symposium

Featuring education about PrEP and the newest treatments for Hep C, the annual Update Symposium offers SLO County's health care providers up-to-date information about HIV/AIDS & Hep C prevention & treatment that will keep our health care community on the forefront of caring for individuals living with these devastating diseases.

The conference will be held on Thursday, March 19th, 11:30am-5:30pm, at the Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo (333 Madonna Road). CMEs & CEUs will be available.



Keep an eye for registration and information as we get closer to March!

For more information, visit www.ASN.org