

Mobilizing Historical Black Colleges and Universities around Preventive and Therapeutic HIV Clinical Research

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OBJECTIVE/TOPIC:

The partnership between Lincoln University of Pennsylvania (LU) and the Legacy Project (LP) has arisen out of the need to increase awareness and understanding of the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about HIV / AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV biomedical research among African American (AA) students, faculty and administrative staff of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). According to a statement on the National Association For Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) website, "HBCUs and PBIs (Predominantly Black Institutions) represent 500,000 students, 53,000 faculty, and 5 million alumni worldwide." The primary objectives of this pilot project are to: 1) assess the level of HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes and beliefs in HBCU African American college students, and faculty (irrespective of race); 2) assess available HBCU resources, services, and programs to support the prevention of HIV/AIDS; and 3) assess the level of HIV clinical trials knowledge, attitudes, and readiness of HBCU African American college students and faculty (irrespective of race). Data generated from this project provides information necessary for the design and implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention interventions and the development of other positive health promotion tools designed for young African Americans college students. Additionally, it is expected that this pilot project will identify opportunities for growth and enhancement in current HBCU HIV/AIDS related support, resources, services and programs.

METHODS/ISSUES:

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is increasing among all Americans but has reached epidemic proportions among African Americans, including African American youth and young adults. According to the CDC, African Americans face the most severe burden of HIV in the US. In 2010, HIV incidence among African Americans was almost eight times higher than that of Whites, and African Americans accounted for almost half (44%) of people living with HIV while only representing approximately 14% of the total US population. HIV has remained steady in almost every population but among youth, particularly African American youth and young adults (including MSM) where it has increased 48% according to recent CDC surveillance data. Along those same lines, African Americans have historically been, and are currently, underrepresented in HIV clinical research trials. The National Medical Association has long recognized that the lack of involvement by African Americans and other people of color in clinical trials has contributed to health disparities. Clinical trials are fundamental to our understanding of the proper diagnosis and treatment of disease and quality of life. HBCUs have provided a fundamental vehicle for the development and education of over 5 million alumni. It is critical to assess the attitudes and perceptions about HIV/AIDS, STIs, and HIV clinical research of youth and young adults during these early development stages into adulthood, in order to have an impact on the epidemic in African American communities. The need to assess and develop prevention, intervention and treatment programs for African American youth and young adults, particularly those attending HBCUs, is essential given the high incidence of HIV/AIDS.

RESULTS/LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Using a mixed method approach, this study explored the barriers and facilitators to engaging HBCU students, faculty and administrative staff in preventive HIV services and programs, and knowledge and readiness to participate in HIV clinical research among HBCU students, faculty and administrative staff. During this one year pilot project, 543 HBCU students completed online surveys, 48 students participated in focus groups, and 24 HBCU faculty participated in one-on-one interviews at 8 HBCU campuses.

CONCLUSIONS/STRATEGIES, METHODS, MODELS, EXAMPLES:

Preliminary findings indicate HBCU students received information regarding HIV/AIDS primarily from peers and online resources. The majority of students noted limited available resources and information on HBCU campuses. These initial findings also indicate that HBCU students are receptive to learning more about HIV clinical research and would consider participating in preventive HIV clinical research after understanding trial goals and safety considerations. HBCU faculty generally reported limited awareness of resources or programs that may be offered on their campus, and few faculty report engaging in conversations with students about HIV/AIDS or HIV clinical research either generally or as a part of the course curriculum. The project has generated much discussion around how to carry these efforts forward and how to integrate HIV prevention and treatment programming and messages on HBCU campuses, as well as how to raise awareness of HIV clinical research among HBCU college students.