TuSalud

Reducing Barriers to HIV Prevention Among Latinos in Texas

A Texas researcher will use a $50,000 grant to explore barriers to HIV prevention among Spanish-speaking migrants.

March 7, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

A UTHealth Houston researcher seeks to improve HIV prevention among Spanish-speaking migrants using a $50,000 grant from the Texas Development Center for AIDS Research (D-CFAR) for a pilot study, according to a news release.

Efforts to improve HIV awareness and reduce new diagnoses are critical to ending the HIV epidemic. The study, "HIV/STI Prevention Among Spanish-speaking Migrants in Houston, Texas," aims to better understand barriers to HIV prevention and improve HIV education among Latinos.

"Hispanic and migrant communities in the U.S. experience a disproportionate burden of HIV, with lower engagement in prevention strategies and reduced HIV knowledge and risk perception," said grant recipient Higinio Fernández-Sánchez, PhD, RN, an assistant professor at the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston, in the release.

In 2022, Latinos made up 18% of the population of the United States but accounted for about 33% (10,500) of HIV infections, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That same year, 31,080 people were living with HIV in Houston; of those, Latinos made up 45.5% of new diagnoses, AIDSVu reports.

With the D-CFAR award, Fernández-Sánchez will work with Houston's Fundación Latino Americana de Acción Social (FLAS), which provides culturally relevant health services to Latinos, including testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections. The study will use a Spanish-language survey to examine barriers to HIV prevention and assess HIV knowledge and perceptions.

"Insights from this study will guide the design of culturally and structurally informed interventions aimed at reducing health disparities and improving HIV prevention among this highly marginalized

population," Fernández-Sánchez said.

Today, even without a cure or a vaccine, we have the means to end the epidemic in the United States and around the world. There are several ways to prevent or reduce the risk of getting HIV, including:

- Getting tested. Approximately 13% of people living with HIV in the United States don't know they have the virus. Know your status to protect you and your partners' health.
- Using condoms. When used correctly and consistently, condoms and lubricant can greatly reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Click here for more ways to practice safer sex.
- Using pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP refers to antiretroviral medication used by an HIV-negative person to reduce the risk of contracting HIV. Options include daily pills and injections every other month. Click here for more info about PrEP.
- Taking post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).PEP involves taking a short course of antiretroviral drugs, usually for a month, after a high-risk exposure. Click here for more about PEP.

To read more, click #HIV or #Prevention. There, you'll see headlines such as "Protecting Key Populations From Abrupt Disruptions to Essential HIV Services," "HIV Is Not a Crime Awareness Day 2025" and "Gilead Aims to Launch Twice-Yearly PrEP This Summer."

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