



Inside an HIV Research Van

Florida doctors combat rising HIV cases.

February 12, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

A new mobile research van operated by doctors at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine delivers information on HIV research to vulnerable South Florida communities to encourage HIV study participation, testing, treatment and prevention.

The mobile unit was launched on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2023. The vehicle is the school's fourth mobile unit offering HIV services.

Mobile clinic vans are transforming HIV care in Florida communities. For several years, University of Miami doctors have provided HIV care via two mobile clinics: the IDEA Exchange mobile clinic for safe syringe exchange and the Rapid Access Wellness mobile unit, which provides pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention.

A third mobile unit, the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Game Changer, operated as a partnership, includes HIV and hepatitis screenings, according to the University of Miami.

The newest van, CONNECT, aims to expand outreach to South Florida locations with rising HIV diagnoses, such as North Miami and Broward County, to make it easier for people to learn about and participate in HIV studies, according to the Miami Herald.

Florida is among the top five states in the country with the highest rates of HIV. More than 117,000 people in Florida were living with HIV in 2021, according to AIDSvu data. Miami-Dade and Broward counties house more than 50,000 people living with HIV.

"We want to go out in the community and let the community know what research studies are ongoing in terms of both treatment and prevention as well as understanding how it's affecting our community," Maria Alcaide, MD, an infectious disease professor and director of clinical research at the University of Miami, told the Herald.

Through the mobile clinic, doctors inform community members living with HIV about various studies they can participate in. For example, the University of Miami MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study investigates the impact of chronic health conditions, such as heart and lung disorders, in people with HIV. Another study is seeking women ages 18 to 45 living with or at risk for HIV and who may be pregnant.

University of Miami doctors teach Floridians of all ages about the importance of HIV testing, prevention and treatment through community events, such as yoga classes, dance contests and HIV Jeopardy.

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