

## DNA info

# Sexual Health 'Story Slam' to Highlight Underused HIV Prevention Pill



By [Allegra Hobbs](#) | April 8, 2016 1:28pm | *Updated on April 10, 2016 8:30pm*  
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The story slam will take place at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe on E. Third Street in the East Village.  
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**EAST VILLAGE** — Storytellers will share their personal experiences with HIV prevention at a special “slam” event on April 21 aimed at promoting sexual health and opening a community dialogue about prevention techniques.

The William F. Ryan Community Health Network will host the “PrEP-ing for Sex Story Slam” at the historic Nuyorican Poets Café on E. Third Street, where storytellers will share three-minute prepared stories about their experiences with the HIV prevention drug PrEP or other prevention efforts.

The organizer hopes the personal anecdotes will help normalize the discussion surrounding the drug among young people.

“We wanted to take a different approach and see if we could reach a new subset of the population,” said Peter Freeman, senior director of Chronic Disease and Population Health at the network. “This is coming directly from the community, as opposed to someone considered an expert in a didactic manner telling you about PrEP.”

PrEP is a daily medication proven to significantly lower an HIV-negative person’s chances of becoming infected, and the country’s leading public health officials have been pushing for its use — yet it remains widely under-prescribed due to fears that a prevention pill would encourage irresponsible sexual behavior, [the \*Wall Street Journal\* reported](#).

But the William F. Ryan network believes this line of thinking is stifling an important conversation that could prevent many from contracting HIV, said Freeman.

“We should talk about it,” he said. “We should normalize it — it should be a normal conversation point for someone interested in sexual health.”

The center in the past has strived to encourage the drug’s use through educational panels led by health care professionals and people actively using PrEP for prevention. But it continues to struggle to reach those who may benefit from PrEP yet are either uninformed about its benefits or are hesitant to start taking it due to social stigmas surrounding HIV.

The story slam, which will also feature free HIV testing, signals a change in the center’s approach to spreading the word about PrEP, said Freeman. The idea is to encourage community members to speak openly about HIV prevention and their experiences surrounding the drug, telling stories about their personal usage, that of a friend or even conversations they have had about the pill.

“We’re taking it out of the realm of a health care provider and putting it back into the hands of people who see it in their everyday lives, and have encountered it in the bedroom or on a date,” he said.

Anyone interested in sharing a story should show up at the café at 5:45 pm with their three-minute piece in preparation for the 6 p.m. event.

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