



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

January 2026



Vanderbilt Comprehensive Care Clinic



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YEAR IN REVIEW

THANK YOU FOR A WONDERFUL 2025

This year was about showing up for our community and for one another. We strengthened partnerships, expanded engagement, and launched our community newsletter to stay connected and informed. We proudly showed up at Nashville Pride and other key moments such as Mashup Weekend, Dining Out for Life, and more, reaffirming our commitment to visibility, presence, and partnership.

Our CFAR Seminar Series continues to thrive, providing spaces for learning, dialogue, and collaboration that engages and inspires participants. The Inter-CFAR Faith and Spirituality Research Collaborative focused on deepening spiritual involvement and fostering meaningful reflection and connection around HIV, creating opportunities for support, understanding, and community growth.

Separately, we celebrated the accomplishments of our investigators—from new grants and publications to innovative research, leadership, and mentorship. Their dedication continues to drive progress and advance the field.

As we look ahead, we carry forward the momentum built through collaboration, reflection, and shared purpose. Together, we are ready to embrace new opportunities, strengthen our impact, and make 2026 truly transformative.

ABOUT THE VANDERBILT COMPREHENSIVE CARE CLINIC

The Vanderbilt Comprehensive Care Clinic (VCCC) was originally founded in 1994 as the Comprehensive Care Center, Middle Tennessee's largest medical home for people living with HIV. During its early days, the clinic responded to an HIV epidemic that was devastating communities and with limited and largely ineffective treatment options. As scientific advances transformed HIV care, the VCCC has grown and evolved, demonstrating that while HIV cannot yet be cured, people living with HIV can have the virus completely controlled, their immune function restored, and long-term health and quality of life sustained.

Today's HIV therapies are highly effective. With consistent treatment, the virus becomes undetectable and cannot be transmitted to others (U = U, Undetectable = Untransmissible), so that people living with HIV may have long, healthy lives. The VCCC presently provides HIV treatment and primary care to nearly 4,000 individuals. The VCCC has been steadfast in its founding mission: to deliver the highest standard of care through dignity, compassion, and the use of advanced medical technologies and treatments.

In addition to HIV and primary medical care, the VCCC offers a comprehensive range of services, including behavioral health care, substance use counseling and treatment, nutrition services, dermatology, women's health and obstetric care,

case management, and social work services. The clinic also serves as the home of the Southeast AIDS Education and Training Center, which provides comprehensive HIV education and training for healthcare providers across eight states in the Southeast (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) so as to increase the size and strength of the HIV clinical workforce.



Presented By:



The annual Ruby Gala in February 2026 supports the VCCC - click below for information on tickets to this event:

<https://give.vanderbilthealth.org/event/ruby-gala-2026/e735370>

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE



Connexion: Using Implementation Science to Develop and Evaluate a Rapid ART Initiative in Memphis, Tennessee

Presented by:

April Pettit, MD, MPH

Professor of Medicine
Divisions of Infectious Diseases & Epidemiology
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Wednesday, January 14th, 2025 | 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ct

CFAR-Wide Seminar Series presented by Tennessee CFAR

"The Body of Christ has AIDS" - A Documentary Film about Church Responses to HIV and AIDS

Stephen Hale

Co-Director, *The Body of Christ Has AIDS*

Margaret Irwin

Co-Director, *The Body of Christ Has AIDS*



Sponsored in part by:



Thursday, January 15th, 2025 | 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm ct

Inter-CFAR FSRC Monthly Working Group Meeting

EXTERNAL EVENTS

How can people advocate for reproductive freedom if they don't truly understand it?

THE AUTONOMY PROJECT

A Reproductive Rights Crash Course

A 4-month series for young adults to help them gain the knowledge and tools to better understand their bodies, identities, and rights.

**October 6, 2025 -
January 26, 2026**

Virtual Meetings Twice
Monthly on Mondays
7:00-8:15pm EST

Queer-Inclusive & Interactive!



Sign up for any individual session or the whole series!



**Scan here
to register!**



RECENT FINDINGS & DISCOVERIES

Our CFAR researchers are all kinds of HIV experts like physicians, nurses, mental health professionals, epidemiologists, mathematicians, community members, and scientists. We study a range of HIV topics spanning all the way from how cells and the virus work to how communities can improve their support for people living with HIV.



IMPORTANT and THANK YOU!

Our work isn't possible without our volunteers: People living with HIV throughout Tennessee. THANK YOU to our research participants and community advisors. We appreciate you.

Quick Update About Immune Cells

Tennessee CFAR researchers are doing complicated and important work to improve our understanding of the immune system and HIV at the cellular level. It has long been known that inflammation raises the risk of heart disease and diabetes, especially for people living with HIV, but the immune processes behind this risk are not fully understood. Earlier this year, a team of scientists from the CFAR showed that interactions among different immune cell types may have a major effect on the risk of developing chronic conditions. They found that pairs of immune cells, made up of 'T cells' and 'monocytes', travel together in the bloodstream and may promote high levels of inflammation even when HIV is well controlled by medication. Higher levels of these paired cells were found in people with diabetes and HIV compared to those with HIV alone. Understanding these interactions may help explain why people with HIV face higher risks of diabetes,

as well as kidney and heart disease, and could guide future strategies to reduce this risk.

This work was made possible by volunteers living with HIV who joined the “HATIM” study coordinated by the Tennessee CFAR. The project was led by Celestine Wanjalla, PhD, MD and John Koethe, MD, who added



Celestine Wanjalla,
PhD, MD

As people with HIV are living longer, staying healthy now means more than controlling the virus alone. We’re learning more about how changes in the immune system can promote diabetes, heart disease, and other inflammation-related conditions, which may lead to new therapies to ensure that longer lives are also healthier, more active, and more fulfilling lives.”

To see the whole publication from The Journal of Immunology [click here](#).

HIV HISTORY 1984

In this pivotal year of the AIDS epidemic, scientific advances, public health guidance, activism, and policy decisions unfold amid urgency and uncertainty. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that researchers at the National Cancer Institute have identified a retrovirus believed to cause AIDS, labeled HTLV-III, and introduced a diagnostic blood test, expressing hope that a vaccine could be developed within two years.

Public health understanding continued to evolve as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that avoiding injection drug use and reducing needle sharing can help prevent transmission—an early acknowledgment of harm reduction. At the same time, fear and misinformation persist when media reports suggested AIDS might be transmissible through saliva, a claim that would not be disproven for two more years.

The human cost remains devastating. AIDS activist Bobbi Campbell, a pioneering advocate who helped put a public face on the epidemic, died of AIDS-related illness at age 32. Meanwhile, policy responses intensify when San Francisco public health officials ordered bathhouses closed due to high-risk sexual activity, sparking debate over public health, civil liberties, and community trust.

[Click Here to learn more](#)

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENROLL INTO RESEARCH STUDIES

Local CFAR investigators lead studies to improve the lives of people living with HIV, to protect people from acquiring HIV, and other important issues.

Studies are looking for:

- [Black or multiracial women who are sexually active](#) [Page 12](#)
- [People living with HIV who regularly drink alcohol](#) [Page 13](#)
- [People without HIV, to find a vaccine against HIV](#) [Page 14](#)
- [Men without HIV, to study long-acting PrEP to prevent HIV](#) [Page 15](#)

Studies typically provide compensation to participants.

If you know of studies that we missed, please let us know at: tn-cfar@vumc.org

Are you a Black woman living in Middle Tennessee?

Researchers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center are exploring HIV prevention among Black women in Middle Tennessee. Participation includes one brief survey and a one-time interview at a time chosen by you.

We would love to hear from you if:

- You are aged 18 years and over
- You are a woman
- You are Black, including multi-racial
- You are or have been sexually active with a man in the past year

Participants are compensated with up to \$50 in e-gift cards for their time and contribution to better understanding preventing HIV in our community.

If you are interested in participating, scan the QR code below for more information!



Date of IRB Approval: 10/14/2025





**META
HIV CVD**

IF YOU HAVE HIV, THIS STUDY MAY BE FOR YOU!

MICROBIOME, METABOLITES, AND ALCOHOL IN HIV TO REDUCE CVD

We're looking for adults ages 18 and older who drink alcohol regularly, are HIV+, and take antiretroviral therapy. We want to see whether taking a supplement called a probiotic can help with some of the gut-related health problems related to alcohol use and HIV.



Participants will be asked to:

- Come to 5 study visits at Vanderbilt over 1 year
- Complete study phone calls about once a month
- Have their blood drawn
- Provide stool samples

Total compensation for
completing the entire
study is \$675

Take our survey to see if you are eligible!

<https://redcap.link/metastudy>

HIV VACCINE STUDIES, TO DISCOVER A VACCINE THAT PROTECTS PEOPLE FROM ACQUIRING HIV



In the United States HIV disproportionately affects certain groups and populations; however, HIV can affect anyone. Worldwide there are currently over 40 million people living with HIV. That number is growing.

The Vanderbilt HIV Vaccine Program is looking for healthy adults (ages 18-55) from all walks of life who are not living with HIV to participate in an HIV prevention study.

You cannot get HIV from participating in the study.

Volunteers must be available locally for approximately 12 months. Volunteers will be compensated. You can help fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Call 615-936-7327 or email vic.sorrell@vumc.org for more information.

In order to develop HIV prevention methods that will work for everyone, we need help from everyone!

ALL RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT OUR PROGRAM.

EXPRESSIVE

Together we can help advance HIV prevention research



Learn about the EXPRESSIVE clinical research study for people who could be exposed to HIV

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) medications may help people at risk of being exposed to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and lower their chance of becoming infected.

This study is comparing an investigational study medicine to an approved PrEP medicine to assess safety, how the investigational study medicine functions in the body, and any side effects (tolerability).

You may qualify to take part in this study if you are at least 16 years of age and:

- Do not have HIV
- Are a cisgender man (assigned male at birth and identify as male), transgender woman (assigned male at birth and identify as female), transgender man (assigned female at birth and identify as male), or gender nonbinary (assigned any gender at birth and do not identify as exclusively male or female)
- Have had receptive anal sex without a condom in the past year (not counting sex in a committed relationship) and **have at least 1** of these situations:
 - Had receptive anal sex with 2 or more partners in the last 3 months, no matter if you used a condom or not.
 - Had rectal or urethral infections like gonorrhea, chlamydia, or syphilis in the last 6 months.
 - Used any stimulant drugs while having sex in the last 3 months.

There are additional eligibility criteria, which the study team can discuss with you.

To learn more, including the possible risks and benefits of participation, please contact:

Call: 615-327-6353

Email: gstanton@mmc.edu

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