



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

June 2026



WHY WE CELEBRATE PRIDE



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WHY WE CELEBRATE PRIDE

One of the stated aims of Tennessee CFAR's grant award from the National Institutes of Health is to grow a broad emphasis on HIV-focused community-engaged research that permeates the CFAR. A fundamental aspect of this involves outreach to communities that are most affected by HIV. Toward this aim, an important activity is the meaningful presence of Tennessee CFAR at Pride events.

Across Tennessee, Pride is more than a celebration. It is a powerful space for outreach, connection, and advancing HIV research through strong collaboration between communities and institutions. Events bring together community members, researchers, and health professionals to build relationships that strengthen both engagement and impact.

Pride plays an important role in supporting coordinated leadership in HIV research by connecting partners across institutions and communities. These moments of engagement help align priorities, share knowledge, and reinforce a collective commitment to addressing HIV through unified, community-informed efforts.

These gatherings also help foster multidisciplinary collaboration, creating opportunities for team-based research that draws on diverse expertise. By engaging directly with communities, researchers gain insights that shape more effective and responsive approaches, while also building partnerships that extend beyond individual projects.

A key outcome of this outreach is the support and development of early-stage investigators. Pride provides a unique environment where emerging researchers can connect with mentors, community leaders, and peers, helping to build the next generation of HIV researchers grounded in real-world engagement and community needs.

Pride also strengthens pathways for expanded collaboration, particularly by connecting investigators with broader networks, shared resources, and new research opportunities. These connections are essential for increasing participation and ensuring that research efforts are inclusive, representative, and impactful.

Finally, Pride reinforces the importance of community-engaged research. By centering lived experiences and fostering trust, these events help ensure that HIV research is not only scientifically rigorous but also meaningful and accessible. This emphasis on engagement, paired with implementation-focused approaches, helps translate research into real-world impact.

Through outreach and connection, Pride in Tennessee continues to serve as a vital bridge between research, institutions, and the communities they serve, advancing progress in HIV care, prevention, and overall quality of life.

TENNESSEE CFAR **EVENTS**

CFAR-Wide Seminar Series presented by Tennessee CFAR

Unlocking potential: challenges and opportunities with implementing evidence-based HIV interventions in the mid-west region.

Wednesday, June 10th, 2026 | 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm CST



[Scan to Register](#)

Juliet Iwelunmor, PhD

Professor of Medicine
Director, Light Institute for Global Health and Transformation
WashU Medicine



tn-cfar.org

EXTERNAL EVENTS



EXTERNAL EVENTS



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.

Community-based participatory research to guide adoption of culturally responsive trauma-informed HIV care throughout Nashville, Tennessee

Researchers from the Tennessee CFAR recently published an important study examining the impact of trauma on individuals living with HIV and how HIV clinics and community organizations in Nashville can better address these challenges. Many people living with HIV have faced difficult or traumatic life events, including violence, racism, stigma, housing instability, and abuse. These experiences can have lasting effects on both physical and mental health.

In the Southern United States, where HIV rates remain among the highest in the nation, trauma can hinder individuals from attending clinic visits, taking their HIV medications regularly, trusting healthcare providers, and remaining engaged in their care over time. Additionally, healthcare workers in the HIV field may

experience burnout and emotional stress, which can negatively affect their ability to provide effective and compassionate care. Consequently, the study focused on how HIV programs across Nashville could collaborate to create a more "trauma-informed" system of care that better supports both patients and healthcare workers.

The study team, led by CFAR leaders Dr. Lauren Brown and Dr. April Pettit, collaborated closely with HIV clinics, community organizations, and the Nashville public health department. They employed a community-based approach that actively involved healthcare workers and community members throughout the project. The investigators conducted interviews with staff members, mapped the pathways patients take through the HIV care system, and organized a city-wide summit to discuss potential solutions.

Participants reported limited availability of trauma screening and mental health services across much of the HIV care network. Providers also expressed their belief that trauma impacts nearly every individual they serve. Additionally, many participants noted that patients often have to recount painful personal stories multiple times when transitioning between services, which can unintentionally lead to re-traumatization.

A key finding was the strong support for enhancing trauma-informed care within Nashville's HIV services. Providers acknowledged that emotional well-being and culturally responsive care are essential. Participants emphasized the need for increased mental health support, better communication, stronger partnerships, and involving people living with HIV in service design. They also recommended wellness programs for healthcare workers to reduce burnout. This work is critical

for Tennessee and the Southeastern U.S., as the region constitutes a significant portion of the nation's HIV epidemic. The study suggests that improving outcomes requires addressing challenges like housing stability, mental health issues, and trust in healthcare systems, beyond just prescribing medications. By promoting collaboration between clinics and community organizations, trauma-informed care can enhance trust, improve long-term engagement, and help individuals achieve viral suppression and healthy aging with HIV. The researchers hope their Nashville-based model will guide other cities in the South towards ending the HIV epidemic while tackling the emotional and social challenges faced by those living with HIV.



L. Lauren Brown,
PhD, LCSW

It was an absolute delight to work on this study with so many important and knowledgeable people in Nashville. We truly had a powerhouse of movers and shakers leading this work, and I'm thrilled to see how far we can take this as a community. From here, we aim to scale trauma-informed care across HIV care spaces in our city. Seeing so many advocates show up and support this work gives me great hope, inspiration, and confidence in our ability to achieve our goals.

If you are interested in learning more, you can [read the article](#) here.

JUNE HIV AWARENESS DAYS



June 5 is HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day. First observed in 2014, it's a day to honor long-term survivors of HIV and raise awareness about their needs, issues, and journeys.

The selection of June 5 for this annual observance coincides with the anniversary of the first official reporting of what became known as the AIDS epidemic on June 5, 1981, when the CDC first reported on five cases of a mysterious disease affecting young gay men. June 5, 1981 is considered the start of the AIDS pandemic. [Click Here to Learn More >](#)



June 8 is Caribbean-American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The goal of the annual observance is to educate Caribbean-Americans about HIV/AIDS and provide resources for HIV testing and treatment.



National HIV Testing Day (NHTD) was first observed on June 27, 1995. This is a day to encourage people to get tested for HIV, know their status, and get linked to care and treatment.

Knowing your HIV status helps you choose options to stay healthy.

[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:

- people living with HIV and depression, to study treatment
- people living with or without HIV, to study gum disease
- Black or multiracial women who are sexually active
- people living with HIV who regularly drink alcohol
- people without HIV, to find a vaccine against HIV
- men without HIV, to study long-acting PrEP to prevent HIV

Studies typically provide compensation to participants.

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



Do you find it hard to enjoy the things you used to love?

If you are living with HIV and are experiencing depression, you may qualify for a new study.

A research team at Vanderbilt is doing a study to find a better way to treat depression in people living with HIV. The study will compare two different medications. Half of the people who sign up will take a medication that's already commonly used for depression. The other half will take a medication that is used to treat a different condition but that may help with depression in people living with HIV. Our researchers want to learn if the medications improve symptoms of depression without having too many side effects.

Total Compensation for completing this trial is \$775



Ready to get started?

Scan the QR CODE to see if you are eligible

Approved by Meharry IRB
Expires on 10/13/2026

MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY

Volunteers needed for research project:

Effect of dental care treatment on gum disease with and without HIV

The purpose of the study is to determine the best way to
remove bad bacteria from the mouth and provide better
dental treatment

Who Is Eligible To Participate?

-Adults that are not pregnant, with or without gum disease

Participants will receive \$50 for each visit

(5 visits): total \$250

Interested?
Scan QR Code

Complete short survey,
and the research team will
contact you



If you have questions, please contact

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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

OUR STUDY

- HIV prevention research
- One daily vs. one monthly pill for two years
- Monthly visits
- Compensation for each visit
- Your protection is always our priority

**SCAN QR CODE
FOR MORE
INFORMATION**



CONTACT

- **Principal Investigator :**
 - Dr. Vladimir Berthaud
- **Research Staff | 615-327-6353**

Clinical Research Team, 4th Floor, Old Hospital Building



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Thank you to **Tiye U. Link, Ed.D., MDiv, M.S.** and **L. Lauren Brown, PhD, LCSW** for collaborating with us on this issue of the Tennessee CFAR Community newsletter. Your contributions and insights have enriched our content and helped us highlight the incredible work being done across our community. We are grateful for your support and dedication to advancing research and education.

Contact Us!

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Email tn-cfar@vumc.org

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