

# PANCAP–K4Health Partnership

## SUCCESS STORY



### Introduction to Rollout of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in Barbados

Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is the use of antiretroviral drugs by people who are not infected with HIV but are at substantial risk of acquiring the virus.[1] PrEP is a cornerstone of the World Health Organization’s “Treat All” guidelines, which remove all limitations on eligibility for antiretroviral therapy (ART) among people living with HIV, and is an essential intervention for countries seeking to reduce HIV prevalence.[2]

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), at the end of 2016, the HIV prevalence in the Caribbean was 1.3%, with an estimated 310,000 people living with the disease. There has been progress in reducing new infections, initiating and retaining persons on ART, and reducing AIDS-related deaths. There is continual scale-up of the response, with greater access to HIV testing through a variety of testing modalities. The gap, however, remains significant—with 81,000 people still to be diagnosed, 92,000 people needing to be placed on ART, and 120,000 people needing to achieve viral suppression. PrEP is an intervention that is critical to closing this gap in the Caribbean.

Anton Best is the senior medical officer of Health for the HIV/STI Programme in the Ministry of Health in Barbados. *“There’s so much science behind PrEP, as a standard intervention of HIV prevention. We just need to do it. You simply need to offer it and determine how you’re going to offer it and determine to what extent you are going to afford it.”*

Best and the Barbados Ministry of Health are members of the Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), a regional partnership of governments, civil society organizations, regional institutions and organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and contributing donor partners. PANCAP brings structure and unity to the Caribbean’s response to the HIV epidemic.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development/Eastern and Southern Caribbean (USAID/ESC) Mission, PANCAP is working with the Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project, a knowledge management (KM) leader in global health, to help its members seek out and share critical Treat All implementation insights. The PANCAP–K4Health partnership achieves this through in-person knowledge exchange events, webinars, synthesized HIV data, documentation of regional best practices, and enhanced communications. Through the various channels, PANCAP members are more systematically exposed to successful HIV programming, globally and in the region, that will help them achieve global HIV targets and roll out Treat All.

The PANCAP–K4Health partnership is already starting to have an impact. In March 2017, during the annual National AIDS Programme Managers and Key Partners meeting, Best and Shanti Singh-Anthony, the PANCAP–K4Health KM coordinator, discussed emerging priorities for the NAP managers, in the context of the new guidelines. During the discussion, PrEP emerged as an area that NAP managers required additional information on. Using information from a recent PrEP presentation she had attended, the KM coordinator worked with Best on a presentation to introduce PrEP during the annual meeting. The KM coordinator had recognized that this information was new and essential to the regional HIV response and that a recognized colleague like Best sharing this information in a more intimate setting would be effective in reaching other program managers in the region. After the meeting, Best did additional reading on the topic, and he knew that Barbados needed to move forward on offering this intervention. Best shared the following:

***“I knew very little on PrEP at the time [before the meeting with Singh-Anthony]. After I did some reading and the presentation, that was the beginning of me saying, ‘Okay, we need to get going on PrEP.’”***

A few months later, the University of West Indies approached Best to present on PrEP during their semiannual conference for health care professionals. In preparation for that conference, Best adapted what he had already presented and, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization, proposed PrEP guidelines for Barbados, which he submitted to the national government to use as part of the national HIV program. By developing the national guidelines, Best is taking global evidence, adapting it to his country, and, in turn, closing the gap in the HIV response in Barbados.

In early March 2018, Barbados approved Best’s submitted guidelines, just days before he provided an update on the PrEP rollout in Barbados during the National AIDS Programme Managers and Key Partners Meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and almost a year to the date from his conversation with Singh-Anthony.



Anton Best contributes to a discussion during a Share Fair hosted by the PANCAP–K4Health partnership in March 2018. Courtesy of Zwade Studio

***“So we have started PrEP because of Knowledge for Health. It took a year, but guess what? I got it done. And I was able to present it at the NAP managers meeting,”*** Best says.

***“The way Dr. Best applied this information to guide the development of the Barbados PrEP program is outstanding and provides practical guidance and considerations to other countries developing their programs. I will continue to provide information to national AIDS program managers and CSOs so that the PrEP agenda can be advanced nationally and regionally,”*** Singh-Anthony shares.

For additional information, visit the PANCAP website: [www.pancap.org](http://www.pancap.org)  
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