

# *Trial program distributes HIV prevention pill in Cuban municipality*

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Havana, May 31 (RHC)-- Cuba has started the free delivery of the pre-exposure prophylaxis pill (PPrE), which prevents the spread of HIV among high-risk healthy people as part of a trial program, local media reported.

"We consider it as a combination therapy whose main goal is changing risky behaviors," said Niura Pérez Castro, head of the municipal STI/HIV/AIDS and hepatitis prevention program in Cardenas, Matanzas.

Pérez Castro added that the drug will be given to those people who have a higher risk of contracting the human immunodeficiency virus.

According to experts, PrEP can reduce the risk of infection by more than 90% in people who are exposed to HIV if they take the medication every day. However, the proper use of condoms is recommended to avoid contracting this and other sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea or syphilis.

The experimental program, the work of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), began to be implemented last month in the municipality of Cárdenas, in the north of the island, where there are 234

HIV-positive persons, where come thirty new cases are reported annually. At the moment 28 people who met the requirements have received the pill at no cost.

Currently there are some 23,000 cases of HIV in Cuba- with a mortality rate of 17% - of which 83% receive antiretroviral treatment for free.

PrEP is a relatively new treatment in the American continent, because according to PAHO, until last year only the US, Canada, Brazil, Bahamas and Barbados included it in its public health system.

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