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NIDA DISSERTATION GRANT AWARDED TO EXAMINE MECHANISMS LINKING HIV SYNDEMIC FACTORS

Mr. Raymond Moody – a 4th year doctoral student in Health Psychology and Clinical Science training program (www.cunyhpcs.org) at the CUNY Graduate Center and a graduate student researcher at Hunter College’s Center for HIV/AIDS Educational Studies and Training (CHEST; www.chestnyc.org) – has been awarded a two year grant totaling \$155,972 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to support his dissertation research.

Gay and bisexual men continue to account for a significant majority of all new HIV infections in the U.S, with condomless anal sex in the absence of PrEP being the most common HIV transmission risk behavior. An HIV syndemic has been identified that consists of several factors (e.g., substance use, sexual compulsivity, depression, partner violence, and trauma from childhood sexual abuse) that have high levels of comorbidity and work synergistically to increase risk. The primary goal of Mr. Moody’s dissertation is to examine three potentially linking mechanisms of syndemic factors: emotion regulation, executive attention, and attentional bias.

The grant will include two distinct studies of HIV-negative gay and bisexual men. Study one will examine the mechanisms as part of *One Thousand Strong*, an ongoing NIDA-funded study of more than 1,000 gay and bisexual men from across the U.S. Study two will involve the recruitment of a New York City based sample of 90 men stratified by substance use and sexual compulsivity and examine these mechanisms using a combination of online and laboratory based methods. The dissertation aims to advance syndemic research and to inform the development of interventions to reduce the burden of HIV among gay and bisexual men.

Mr. Moody’s research team includes mentorship from Dr. Jeffrey Parsons’, Director of CHEST, and Drs. Tyrel Starks and Jon Rendina, all members of the Hunter College Department of Psychology and the Health Psychology and Clinical Science doctoral training program at CUNY. The project will also involve many students and interns from the Hunter College CHEST.

CHEST’s mission is to conduct research to identify and promote strategies that prevent the spread of HIV and improve the lives of people living with HIV. We have been advocating for and working with the LGBT community since 1996. www.chestnyc.org

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