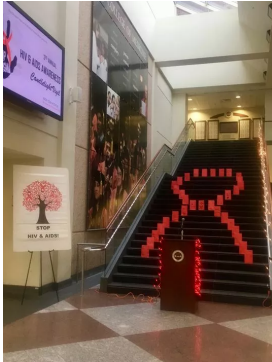


# FSU College of Medicine hosts World AIDS Day vigil

Morgan Dobbins, Staff Writer Published 1:02 p.m. ET Dec. 10, 2017 | Updated 2:09 p.m. ET Dec. 10, 2017



(Photo: Morgan Dobbins/FSView)

From 2008 to 2010, there were about 32 new HIV cases and 19 new AIDS cases in Leon County. During this time period, Leon County reported 1,392 cases of gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis. Gonorrhea and syphilis rates are higher in this county than anywhere else in Florida, while Chlamydia has doubled between 2000 and 2010.

"15 percent of all people with HIV don't know it," said keynote speaker Dr. Temple Robinson, M.D. "That means, in this area, approximately 300 residents are infected and exposing others because they don't know it."

These shocking statistics on sexually transmitted infections and AIDS led Florida State University's chapter of the Student National Medical Association to host a vigil on Friday, Dec. 1, World AIDS Day, in the College of Medicine Atrium.

World AIDS Day was founded in 1988 and is the first global health day. Since first being identified in 1984, more than 35 million people have died of HIV/AIDS.

The event hosted multiple tables from the community including the Leon County Health Department, MedLife, Allopathic Integrative Medicine and Black Women in Medicine.

"We really try to include every community organization that was willing to join us, on-campus undergraduate and graduate RSOs," said Stephanie Williams, Student National Medical Association Community Service Chair. "We try to get that involvement from everybody."

The Center for Health and Wellness (CHAW) also had a table, providing an informative game that shared striking statistics about STDs in the FSU and Tallahassee community. For example, in the 20 to 24-year-old age range, 2,964 cases of Chlamydia were reported for Leon County, making this the age range most likely to contract the disease.

"We do have rates of HIV as well as high rates of STIs," explained Joslyn Armstrong, Sexual Health Counselor at CHAW. "HIV and STIs are a problem on this campus, which is why our office is working to reduce those rates."

CHAW offers free HIV testing every day from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m, which gives results back in about 15 minutes. The center also provides free condoms, flavored condoms and lubricants, as well as sexual health education and consultations.

"We know that the numbers, unfortunately, still are growing, with people transmitting HIV, especially within the African-American community," Williams said. "There is disparity there."

42 percent of the population that was diagnosed with HIV in 2016 were African-American, while 24 percent were Caucasian and 32 percent were Hispanic, according to statistics on the Florida Department of Health website. Nationally, the numbers are very similar.

Although the number of HIV cases in Florida has decreased from 6,498 in 2007 to 4,972 in 2016, the numbers have risen since their lowest point of 4,370 in 2013.

"There is still a huge stigma today that is associated with having HIV," Williams said. "If we can reduce that, we believe that more people would get tested and less people would deal with depression associated with that."

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