

## **HHS Office for Civil Rights launches campaign to increase awareness of HIPAA rights among HIV-positive Black men**

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is proud to launch the *Information Is Powerful Medicine* campaign. The campaign aims to increase awareness of HIPAA rights and benefits among HIV-positive Black men who have sex with men (MSM). The launch will coincide with the official start of Black Pride in Washington, DC and is co-hosted by partner organization Whitman-Walker Health. Invited speakers include representatives from the White House, Department of Health and Human Services, community based organizations, healthcare providers and patient advocates.

Black MSM continue to be disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic. Although Black MSM comprise only 1 percent of the US population, they represent over 25 percent of new HIV infections. Washington D.C. remains one of the hardest hit cities in the nation by the HIV epidemic.

The *Information Is Powerful Medicine* campaign highlights key protections for this important population. Featuring confident men, the campaign urges individuals to access their medical records.

The right to access personal health information is a cornerstone of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule. Under the HIPAA Privacy Rule, patients can ask to see or get a copy of their health information, including an electronic copy, and with limited exceptions healthcare provider must give you a copy. Patients may have to put their request in writing and pay for the cost of copying, mailing, or the electronic media on which the information is provided, such as a CD or flash drive. In most cases, copies must be given to the patient within 30 days. Health information is critical to all consumers, especially for those living with conditions like HIV/AIDS. Access to information can empower patients to track their progress, monitor their lab results, communicate with their treatment teams, and adhere to their important treatment plans.

E-health tools, like the patient portal sponsored by providers such as Whitman-Walker Health, make it easier, safer, and faster for consumers to get access to their health information and to become a true partner in their health care and wellness.

Washington D.C. was selected for the campaign launch because of the city's highly attended Black Pride weekend. Black Pride weekend represents a moment to celebrate and acknowledge the importance of individuals' rights. In addition to Washington D.C., *Information Is Powerful Medicine* will roll-out at Black Pride events over the summer in Chicago, New York City, Atlanta and Oakland. Ads will also appear in national publications, websites and social media, and key community stakeholders are participating to help disseminate the campaign.

To learn more about the campaign and HIPAA, please visit [AIDS.gov/privacy](http://AIDS.gov/privacy).

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