

## Is the quest for profits getting in the way of ending the HIV epidemic?

Four decades after the [HIV](#) epidemic began, there's finally hope it might end. Indeed, "Getting to Zero" — meaning zero new [HIV infections](#) — is a slogan used by the World Health Organization and [others](#) in fighting the epidemic.

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For Gilead Sciences, the manufacturer of the only two FDA-approved pills for [HIV-preventing pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP], the most important zeroes seem to be those the company is adding to its [bottom line](#).

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Enter Descovy, another PrEP pill from Gilead that the [FDA approved in 2019](#). Generics for Descovy aren't expected until at least 2022, and possibly 2025. Gilead has been aggressively marketing Descovy for PrEP, including a [newly launched ad campaign](#). We've heard research teams — which included Gilead representatives — suggest at scientific conferences that Descovy is not only safer but also possibly more effective than Truvada for PrEP.

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Hyping Descovy over Truvada for PrEP might lead patients or doctors to hesitate to use Truvada, both the brand-name medication and the generic. That's not a theoretical concern. Prescriptions for Truvada, approved to treat HIV in 2004, [declined substantially](#) in 2016, when Descovy was approved to treat HIV.

There's no question that having another option for PrEP besides Truvada is a good thing. But when choosing a medication, people should rely on evidence, not advertising.

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