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CVS Locking Condoms in East Los Angeles, Communities of Color

Lincoln Heights, Calif. – CVS drugstores in Los Angeles' Eastside are locking up condoms, a practice that stigmatizes condoms and condom users, according to public health advocates who today announced results of a survey revealing CVS's practice of locking up condoms more often in Latino areas and communities of color. Walgreen's has a policy against locking up condoms.

“As a Latino community we have made great strides in backing down the stigma and phobia regarding HIV/AIDS. We will not tolerate companies like CVS locking up the condoms in our community and creating the perception that condoms are not to be looked at or sold without assistance, which can feel like supervision. We as an HIV prevention community will take action upon CVS until they unlock the condoms,” said Richard Zaldivar, executive director of The Wall Las Memorias, one of the organizers of today's demonstration.

In the last week, surveyors visited 45 CVS stores in Los Angeles County to investigate condom lockup. The surveyors found that CVS keeps condoms under lock and key in eleven – nearly one-quarter – of the stores visited. The surveyed CVS stores with condom lockup are more often located in areas with higher concentrations of Latinos and people of color. All of the CVS stores found with locked condoms were on the Eastside of Los Angeles.

“Minority health indicators, especially as it relates to sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, are worrisome enough. No matter where you live, buying condoms can literally mean the difference between life and death, and people on the Eastside should have equal access to condoms. In HIV prevention, communities of color, women and young people, need a partner in prevention, not another insensitive corporate giant. CVS should be called to answer for its practices,” said Jorge-Mario Cabrera of Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA).

Of the 23 stores surveyed in the West side of Los Angeles – the part of the County with proportionately fewer residents of color and of Latino background – not a single CVS locked up condoms. In comparison, in one-half of the 22 East side stores visited – where the population is heavily Latino and majority people of color – all of the condoms were under inaccessible without staff assistance. In the zip codes of the stores where condoms were locked up, the resident populations are 62% nonwhite and 60% Latino, on average, compared to 37% nonwhite and 35% Latino in the zip codes with stores without condom lockup.

HIV/AIDS in L.A.'s Communities of Color

In the City of Los Angeles, half of all newly diagnosed people with AIDS are Latino. Latinas are four times more likely than white women to be diagnosed with AIDS. Los Angeles is second among U.S. cities in the number of AIDS cases with over 60,000.

Nationally, HIV/AIDS is a leading cause of death for Latinos and Blacks. The rate of new HIV infections among Latinos is three times the rate among whites, and HIV/AIDS is the number one killer of black American women between the ages of 25 and 34.

L.A.'s Eastside CVS Condom Lockup Reflects National Pattern

According to a [report](#) published last year, surveyors found that condom lockup was widespread in CVS stores across the country, and that the proportion of CVS stores that locked up condoms increased with the percentage of residents of color in the stores' zip codes. Nationally, public health advocates are criticizing CVS for locked condom cases, saying it is creating a barrier which could decrease condom use.

The CVS stores with condom lockup are also more likely to be located in areas with the greatest concentrations of Latinos and people of color, creating a deterrent in communities most at risk of HIV/AIDS.

Similar events were also held today in New York, Dallas and San Diego while advocates are informing consumers about similar issues outside CVS drugstores in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Houston and Orlando today. News of today's demonstrations against CVS's policies comes on the heels of protests outside CVS drugstores last week in Boston and Miami. These events across the country highlight a pattern with CVS's poor behavior that is not restricted to individual stores and taken together, point to a corporate problem.

For more information visit www.CureCVSNow.org

Cure CVS is an initiative by Change to Win and partner organizations to reform the drugstore industry, starting with CVS, the country's leading provider of prescription drugs and largest drugstore chain. By joining concerned citizen groups with the six million members of Change to Win unions, Cure CVS aims to ensure that CVS provides equal access across all communities and income levels to its stores and services, offers fair and accurate prices, provides quality products and services, protects customers' privacy and puts quality pharmacy care first.

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