

## Investigating factors associated with awareness and use of PrEP and PEP among Queensland tertiary students

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**Background:** Surveillance data indicate that HIV notifications among young Australians (<24-years) increases 13-fold by the time they reach early 20's. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) are effective biomedical HIV prevention strategies. However, little is known about PrEP/PEP knowledge and practices among young Australians. This study investigated the awareness and use of PrEP/PEP among Queensland Tertiary students.

**Methods:** Using data from the 2019 Tertiary Students Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey, descriptive, univariate, and multivariate analysis were conducted to investigate potential associations of key variables with PrEP/PEP knowledge and practices. Factors significantly associated with the outcome of interest in the univariate analysis were included in the multivariate model. PrEP eligibility criteria were used to assess those eligible for and using PrEP.

**Results:** Awareness of PrEP/PEP among those <24-years was relatively low (25.7% and 20.9% respectively). Factors significantly associated with PrEP/PEP awareness included identifying as men who have sex with men (aOR PrEP 67.9, PEP 23.3), non-binary/gender-diverse (aOR PrEP 8.6, PEP 3.8) or a different gender identity (aOR PEP 10.8, PrEP not significant) and previous HIV testing (aOR PrEP 2.0, PEP 2.4). Condom usage and older age (>20 years) were also associated with increased awareness of PrEP/PEP. Of those eligible for PrEP 61.0% were under the age of 24-years, with 75.0% of these young people reporting never using PrEP.

**Conclusion:** This study highlights that while subsets of young people are aware of PrEP and PEP, many eligible young people are not accessing these prevention options despite government subsidised access now available in Australia – representing valuable future health promotion opportunities to increase uptake and reduced the impact of age-related HIV risk, and the resulting health and economic burdens of life-long HIV infection. Addressing our identified gaps in understanding will improve the sexual health outcomes for young Australians at risk of HIV.

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