

LOW PRIOR EXPOSURE AND INCIDENCE OF HEPATITIS C IN HIV NEGATIVE GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN: FINDINGS FROM THE EXPANDED HIV PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PREP) IMPLEMENTATION IN COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA (EPIC-NSW) STUDY

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Background:

Use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among gay and bisexual men has been associated with an increased risk of hepatitis C acquisition. The aim of this study is to describe hepatitis C exposure and incidence among early-PrEP users in NSW/ACT.

Methods:

The Expanded PrEP Implementation in Communities–New South Wales (EPIC-NSW) study was a cohort study of daily co-formulated tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine for HIV prevention. We recruited 9709 people at high risk of HIV acquisition from 31 clinics across New South Wales and the Australia Capital Territory in Australia. We report exposure to HCV (HCV antibody or RNA positive) prior to baseline and incidence, evidence of first positive result only after baseline, in this cohort between 2016 and 2019.

Results:

PrEP was dispensed and at least one HCV test result was available for 8658 participants. These individuals had a median age of 34 years (IQR 28-43), most of whom were male (8530, 98.5%), identified as gay (7944, 91.8%), and were born in Australia (51.8%). Exposure to HCV prior to baseline was detected among 81 participants (0.9%, 95% CI 0.7 to 1.2%). Twenty of 8577 participants were diagnosed with incident infection (risk 0.23%, 95% CI 0.14 to 0.36). They were significantly older (median age 41 years vs 34 years, $p=0.044$), and more likely to report methamphetamine use at baseline than those without incident infection (risk ratio 2.96, 95%CI 1.08 to 7.84).

Conclusion:

In this population of PrEP users, HCV prior exposure and incidence were low. This study was conducted co-incidental with population access to HCV treatment and substantial declines in HCV GBM in NSW. In this setting, in conjunction with regular access to clinical care, there was no evidence of PrEP resulting in high rates of HCV acquisition.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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