

What does PrEP mean for safe sex in Sydney?

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Over	/iew		
 Outline of this qualitative study 			
• Fine	dings		
•	Condomless sex		
•	'New stigma'		
•	Risk mitigation strategies		
•	Sexually transmissible infections		
•	HIV-related anxiety		
•	Reciprocity and citizenship		
•	The condom question		
•	Sexual negotiation in the PrEP age)	
•	Serostatus and identity		
•	Sex and liberation		

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What does PrEP mean for 'safe sex' in Sydney?		
 Sydney-based gay men taking PrEP (through clinical trials OR personal importation) Sydney based equivally active UV positive gay men 		
 Sydney-based sexually active HIV positive gay men Sydney-based HIV sexually active negative gay men 		
 Australian-based healthcare providers Australian-based HIV sector professionals involved in PrEP policy and advocacy 		
 Individuals are interviewed twice, about a year (9-18months) apart 		
Recruitment of community participants:		
ACON 'Ending HIV' elist		
 Advertisements at Fairday and in the SSO 		
 Purposive sampling of transmen and people who stopped PrEP 		

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Included in this analysis

43 interviews

5 health care providers
25 PrEP takers (4 importers, 4 Prelude,17 Epic)
5 HIV negative men not on PrEP
2 HIV positive men not on PrEP
6 repeat interviews (5 PrEP users, 1 non-user – including 4 former importers now all on EPIC)

3 focus groups

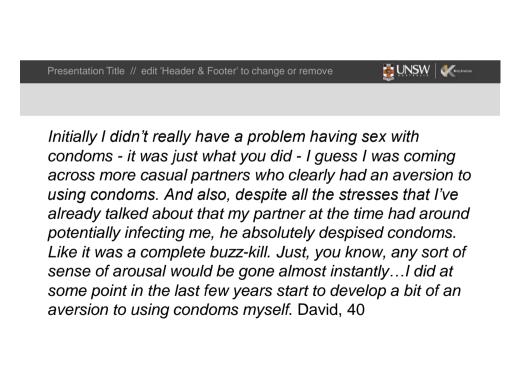
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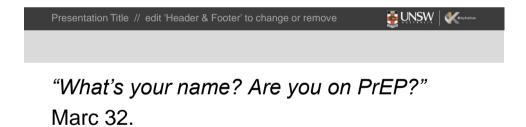
12 community sector workers 1 health care provider

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The condom question	
 Wide range of responses re condom histor what you did' to something to avoid as muc through other risk reduction strategies (esp 	ch as possible
 Willingness to use condoms was related to pleasure and partner satisfaction 	personal
 Condoms had negative symbolic means fo (HIV) and positive symbolic meaning for ot respect) 	
 Men taking PrEP all reported less condom uptake – in repeat interviews there is even use than in initial ones 	

I didn't start taking PrEP to be able to not use condoms. It's been quite a, quite a shift I suppose. I went on there as extra protection but then a few situations came up where I didn't use condoms for whatever reason and then I've gone, "Oh, oh, this, you know, I've kind of, kind of developed a taste for it." Teddie, 32

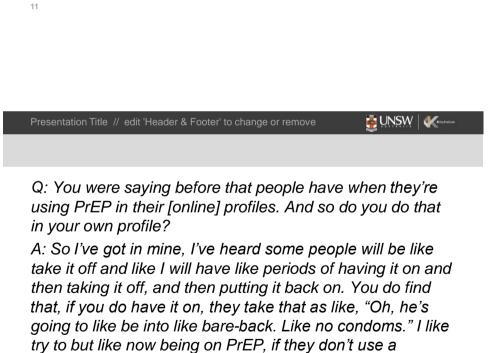


S	exual negotiation
•	Sexual negotiation has changed PrEP is only one factor in this – digital technology and treatment-as-prevention are other very significant factors
•	Some (older) men champion all prevention options in negotiation
•	Condom use is getting harder to negotiate, and some men are initiating PrEP to stay 'in the game' rather than due to their own desire for condomless sex
•	These days I'm seeing more and more peoplethey feel like they are missing out because the guy on PrEP ends up not necessarily having sex with them because they don't want to use a condom – Sydney focus group
•	Men don't always have equal power in negotiation



Negotiation

Basically, I really didn't know how to navigate conversations a lot or I just forgot about conversations in the moment. So this was something ... I like to think I'm pretty organised so for me being able to do something daily is a lot easier than one thing like when you're with somebody - Lance, 34



condom, I don't push too hard - Calvin, 19

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Yeah, I probably did notice that people were far more willing than I had anticipated to have unprotected sex without any kind of conversation about it, which I found a bit confronting, which was part of the reason that I kind of wanted to go back onto PrEP and was glad that I wasn't feeling sick because of it, because I just, yeah, it seems like people have a very casual attitude towards protection in the gay community now, much more so than when I was in my early twenties

Manacounda, 30

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	For men under 30, direct contact with someone with HIV – especially a friend seroconverting – had a big impact. Some didn't know if they'dever had sex with a person with HIV
•	Some, but not all, were very aware of undetectable viral load being 'safe' for HIV transmission (but some wanted PrEP in addition, including those in long term relationships with HIV+ men)
•	PrEP was often discussed as something that reduced the difference between HIV+ and HIV- men, especially in the older men

PrEPsters and HIVers

Prior to PrEP, asking someone are they undetectable when you highly suspect that they're HIV positive would be considered, you know, that's really intrusive and rude. You would just, you know, use a condom. But, you know, if you say, you know, if you're in that sort of same sort of situation now, instead of actually having to sort of say something really kind of rude because if someone has been HIV positive for a while it might have a little bit of lipo or something like that and, of course, saying, you know, "Are you HIV positive?" is kind of like making, you know, a comment on how they look. [Yep] So, instead of having to do all that sort of stuff, you can sort of say something like, "I'm on PrEP. Are you undetectable?" Gordon, 50

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Sexual liberation through PrEP

PrEP use as relieving anxiety was an extremely common theme

For me...sex has always been riddled with guilt and anxiety, and fear. It's just, it's just the way it's always been from, from when I was, you know, 17 to all the way up until like when we started on PrEP a year ago.

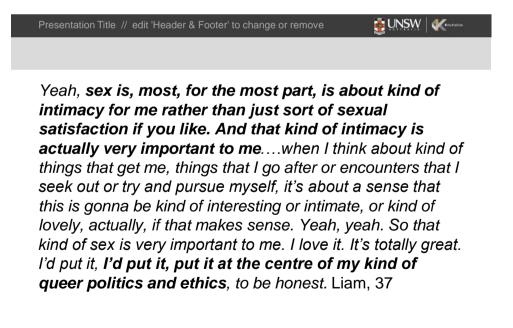
Marc, 32

For me it just kind of, it feels like I'm a little bit freer and, as someone with a lot of anxiety, that is a, you know, a good thing. And, yeah, it's, it's helped me to sort of open up, sexually. So like I've, I've certainly become far more confident, sexually, since I've been on PrEP than I was prior to it – Manacounda, 30

Sex and meaning

[Sex is] something that brings pleasure and enjoyment, and makes me feel happy, and I consider it kind of important on one level recreation, on another level way of connecting with people. Jack, 40

[Sex has] become my social activity...it's the way I connect. And one of the things I love about Scruff is I talk to people who I would never talk to, that I would never cross paths with, who are interesting, nice, intelligent, smart, generous chaps who like to fuck slightly older men. Steve, 53



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It also has to be defining and mean something in more than just, you know, something physically pleasurable. It has to have other contextual meaning to it too. So it's just like playing, playing music for, you know, you know, four hours at a time. It has to, it's not just notes and making a sound: it has to have, you know, meaning for you. So the same goes for sex, you know. It's like a, it's kind of like playing a musical instrument. It's the same thing, you know.

What kind of meanings does [sex] have for you?

So it's who I am as in identity. It has connectivity in intimacy - connectedness. Gordon, 50

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Conclusions
 Gay male sex cultures are changing, with PrEP one of many factors influencing this.
 PrEP did not precipitate condomless sex in this group, but it has enabled gay men to talk about it openly
 For some men, condoms were laden with negative symbolic meanings, and PrEP offers a liberation from these meanings.

- For other men, dislike of condoms is simply about sensation.
- Norms of sexual negotiation are in flux, and this could be a problem for those with lesser ability to negotiate.
- Sex is a key expression of identity and human connection for many men in this study

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Thank you				
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