Assessing The HIV Prevention Needs Of Young Gay And Bisexual Men in the PrEP Era: Behavioural Trends From the GCPS

Curtis Chan, Tim Broady, Benjamin Bavinton, Limin Mao, Garrett Prestage and Martin Holt
The Centre For Social Research In Health

Acknowledgements:
• The GBM who participated in the GCPS, and AFAO & NAPWHHA

Disclosures:
• Funding received from the Australian Government Department of Health and state/territory health departments
BACKGROUND/AIMS & METHODS:

• Internationally, young gay and bisexual men (YGBM) are less experienced with sexual health services (Bumgarner et al., 2017; Mustanski et al., 2011).
• In Australia, younger age is associated with lower PrEP awareness (Holt et al., 2016) and PrEP uptake (Hammoud et al., 2019)
• Australian YGBM have been argued to be at greater HIV risk (Cameron, 2014)
• This study aims to assess their needs and determine their relative HIV risk compared to older men.

• GCPS – repeated cross-sectional surveys of men who have had sex with a man in the past 5 years or identifies as gay or bisexual.
• Age groups compared were between men aged 16-24 and 25-49 between 2014-2018 across all states
• Measures include questions on sexual health behaviours (consistent condom use, PrEP knowledge and uptake, testing) as well as demographic information (employment, education, sexual identity)
• Multivariate logistic regressions were performed on the most recent survey round in each state (either 2017-2018)
• Separate logistic regression models were also performed on YGBM and older men to assess trends over time
RESULTS:

- Compared to older men:
  - YGBM have **lower PrEP knowledge** \((p=.013)\) and **lower PrEP uptake** \((p=.001)\)
    - PrEP uptake has increased in both groups \((p<.001)\) but at a more rapid rate in older men
  - YGBM have **similar levels of condomless anal intercourse with casual partners** \(\text{CAIC}\) \((p=.119)\)
    - Both groups have increasing levels of CAIC over time \((p<.001)\)
  - YGBM were **more likely to have never been tested for HIV** \((22\% \text{ of YGBM compared to } 4.3\% \text{ of older men})\)
    - Both groups have increased levels of testing BUT this was driven by PrEP users.
  - YGBM have **fewer sexual partners** and appear to be decreasing over time
  - YGBM are **less socially engaged with gay men** \((p<.001)\) and are **less likely to be gay-identified** \(<.001\)
CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

- Despite the concern, YGBM do not appear to be at a disproportionately higher HIV risk than older GBM.
  - Lower engagement in sexual services is partially mitigated by fewer sexual partners.
- However, there are a minority of YGBM that require support
- There also appears to be a widening gap on PrEP use between YGBM and older GBM.
  - Potentially due to perceived cost (YGBM have lower incomes) or self-perception of being low risk
  - Lower awareness
- Lower social engagement requires different approaches to reach this population.
  Implications for community-level health messaging strategies.
- The kids are alright, but we should still check in on them
  - Continued monitoring of YGBM is recommended to encourage safe sex practice earlier in life, as well as limit any growing disparities in risk between YGBM and older men