

Filling holes: How community bridges the gap in Australia's PrEP healthcare coverage

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Background/Purpose:

Recently, HIV notifications have declined amongst Australian-born men who have sex with men (MSM), but not overseas-born MSM HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is highly effective in reducing HIV transmission and is subsidised for people with Medicare. Lack of Medicare access and real/perceived costs are barriers for some overseas-born individuals.

The PrEP Coupon Scheme is an initiative of the PAN [PrEPaccessNOW] that provides free PrEP coupons to those without affordable access.

Approach:

The scheme, which commenced in 2016, continues to enable zero-cost access for those otherwise unable to afford. Since PBS availability this caters predominantly to Medicare ineligible individuals.

Applicants require; a valid PrEP prescription in their name dated within 28 days, photo ID, to reside in Australia. Successful applicants receive a coupon code to order 3-months free PrEP.

Outcomes/Impact:

Between February 17-August 16 2020, 204 unique applications were received.

Sexual orientation and gender/sex was not captured in the data.

Average age (years) 29 (R:19-58); country of origin: China (n=29), Columbia (n=19), Malaysia (n=14), Taiwan (n=9), Indonesia (n=7) Thailand (n=6), other (n=120); primary language at home: English (n=76), Mandarin (n=46), Spanish (n=31), Portuguese (n=7), other (n=44).

135/204 (66.2%) did not have Medicare, 138/204 (67.6%) were students, and 127 (62.3%) disclosed no work or financial stress.

2 (.98%) applications were declined.

Innovation/Significance:

The scheme's success has resulted in international replication. Data suggests a need for wider schemes for affordable PrEP access.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No disclosures of interest (Michael Whelan, Chris Dimeglio, Jason Van Der Velden, Freddy Raftellis, Jon Kok)

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