

“How PrEPared Are You?” An exploration into the knowledge of and attitudes toward PrEP among overseas-born, newly arrived gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men in Australia

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Background:

We investigated the knowledge of and attitude towards PrEP among overseas-born, newly arrived gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) in Australia. We noticed an upward trend of HIV notification among this population as well as the general minimum awareness of PrEP. We also explored participants' opinions of new PrEP modalities following recent development in injectable PrEP and PrEP implants.

Methods:

We used a qualitative research methodology using a purposive sampling method. We complemented social determinant of health principles with an intersectional lens and decolonizing research methodology to investigate intersecting barriers in understanding PrEP. A reflexive thematic analysis was used in the data analysis. Interviews were conducted between February to September 2021.

Results:

We conducted 22 interviews with participants of varying PrEP use. Participants' views reflect the intersections between systemic and socio-cultural factors that influenced their perception of PrEP. These include the high cost of PrEP without Medicare, Australia's universal health insurance scheme, that intersect with minimum information specific to this population, internalized stigma resulting from homo- and sex-negativity, and stigma against PrEP users as sexually promiscuous. For participants who were on PrEP, community connectedness, positive relationships with doctors and nurses, and being informed of the option to import PrEP for overseas pharmacy at a low rate helped them to overcome some of these barriers. In relation to new PrEP modalities, the majority favored injectable PrEP but not PrEP implants.

Conclusion:

We concluded that on-going advocacy to make PrEP free for all irrespective of Medicare eligibility is needed. This coincides with resources about PrEP specific to this population, as well as increasing the capacity of publicly funded sexual health clinics to offer a multi-lingual service to end HIV transmission among this population.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.