

WHO IS THE EPIC-NSW PREP PROGRAM REACHING? A COMPARISON OF EPIC-NSW PARTICIPANTS AND HIV NOTIFICATIONS

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Introduction: The EPIC-NSW PrEP program commenced in March 2016 and has rapidly expanded. By mid-June 2017, 25 urban and regional clinics (private and public) have enrolled over 6200 participants assessed as being at high risk of HIV, 99% identified as gay and bisexual men. We examined whether EPIC-NSW participants are representative of people newly diagnosed with HIV, to guide future PrEP implementation.

Methods: We used demographic data available from 5376 participants enrolled in EPIC-NSW to 31 March 2017 who consented to data linkage or completed the baseline behavioural survey. We compared EPIC-NSW participants to all 283 HIV notifications reported to have male-to-male sex as their exposure risk in NSW in 2015, using a Chi² test.

Results: Comparing EPIC-NSW participants to HIV notifications, there were no differences in the proportion residing in urban areas (94% vs 93%, $p=0.41$) or Indigenous (1.5% vs 1.4%, $p=0.88$). However, EPIC-NSW participants were less likely to be aged <30 years (26% vs 33%, $p=0.01$) and overseas-born overseas (38% vs 47%, $p=0.002$). In the overseas-born category, EPIC-NSW participants were less likely to be born in South East Asia (7% vs 19%, $p<0.001$) and North East Asia (4% vs 11%, $p<0.001$) and more likely to be born in the Americas (7% vs 3%, $p=0.03$). There were no differences in the proportions born in North West Europe (10% vs 7%, $p=0.11$) and Oceania (4% vs 3%, $p=0.49$).

Conclusion: These findings suggest that the rapid scale up of PrEP in NSW has reached gay and bisexual men representative of men newly diagnosed with HIV with respect to area of residence and Indigenous status, yet there is under-enrolment of young and Asian men. Ongoing analyses of potential under-representation among high-risk groups are important to maximise the population-level impact of PrEP and facilitate equitable access. Community health promotion initiatives are underway to engage, raise awareness and encourage enrolment among these groups.