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

Guy R1, Wabe N1,2, Watchirs-Smith L1, Schmidt HM2, Amin J1,3, Ogilvie E1, Zablotska I1, Selvey C2, Holden J2, Price K4, Jin J1, McNulty A5, Smith D6, Yeung B1, Levitt G1, Vaccher S1, Vaughan MV3, Velecky M2, Bennett C2, Cooper D1 Grulich A1, for the EPIC-NSW Study Group.

1The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales Sydney, NSW, Australia
2The NSW Ministry of Health, Sydney, NSW, Australia
3The Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia
4AIDS Council New South Wales (ACON), Sydney, NSW, Australia
5Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Sydney, NSW, Australia
6Mid North Coast Local Health District (Area HIV/Sexual Health Services), Lismore Health Service, Lismore, NSW, Australia

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.