

## **PrEPMe: Provision of PrEP for overseas-born MSM without Medicare in Melbourne Victoria**

### **Authors**

Armishaw J<sup>1</sup>, Pierce A<sup>2,3</sup>, Price B<sup>1</sup>, Catton M<sup>4</sup>, Metcalf H<sup>1,5</sup>, Lilley G<sup>1</sup>, Ryan K<sup>2</sup>, Murphy D<sup>1</sup>, Whelan M<sup>6</sup>, Hoy J<sup>2</sup>, Wright EJ<sup>2,7,8</sup>

1. Department of Infectious Diseases, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2. Department of Infectious Diseases, Alfred Hospital and Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
3. Department of Infectious Diseases, Monash Medical Centre, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
4. Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory, The Royal Melbourne Hospital at The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
5. The Royal Melbourne Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
6. PAN (PrEP Access Now), Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
7. The Burnet Institute, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
8. The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

### **Background/Purpose:**

Over the past decade in Australia, HIV notifications have declined in Australian-born, but not overseas-born men who have sex with men (MSM). HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is highly effective in reducing HIV transmission and is subsidised for people with a Medicare card. The costs of clinical monitoring and PrEP medication are a barrier for some overseas-born individuals, along with privacy concerns when using private health insurance for sexual healthcare. *PrEPMe* is an initiative of the Victorian HIV Prevention Service and the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory and offers a free clinical service for overseas-born individuals, without Medicare seeking PrEP.

### **Approach:**

The *PrEPMe* clinic commenced in June 2020 at The Alfred Hospital. The clinic is nurse-led with physician support. The free service includes consultations, pathology, hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis A (HAV) vaccinations, treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), education about HIV PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis and advice on accessing low-cost PrEP through local pharmacies, or online. We report patient demographics, baseline test results and PrEP purchasing outcomes.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

Between June 01-July 30 2020, 50 men attended the *PrEPMe* clinic. Ninety-eight % (49/50) were MSM with a mean age, 27 years (range: 21-47); country of birth: China (n=9), Malaysia (n=5), Columbia (n=5), Philippines (N=4), Ireland (n=4), other (n=23); visa category of the men: student (n=28), working holiday (n=14), other (n=8). At baseline, 3/50 (6%) men had any STI, 1 man was diagnosed with chronic HBV and 18/50 (36%) men were non-immune to HBV, HAV or both. At follow-up, 48/50 men reported having purchased low-cost PrEP either from local pharmacies (16/48), online (17/48), or a combination of both (15/48).

### **Innovation and Significance:**

*PrEPMe* is a unique HIV prevention service for overseas-born Medicare-ineligible individuals seeking PrEP. Data on the first 50 clinic attendees demonstrate high PrEP uptake.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement**

All authors report no disclosures of interest in relation to this abstract