

WHY ARE SOME GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN ELIGIBLE FOR PREP BUT NOT TAKING IT?

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Background: Eligibility criteria for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for gay and bisexual men (GBM) include any one of: having an HIV-positive partner with detectable viral load; receptive condomless anal intercourse with casual partners (CLAIC); methamphetamine use; or a recent rectal sexually transmissible infection. More GBM remain eligible for PrEP than have yet commenced it.

Methods: Flux is a national online cohort study examining drug use among GBM. By April 2017, 779 HIV-negative GBM completed 18 months follow-up. We identified factors associated with not commencing PrEP among men who met any of the eligibility criteria.

Results: Whereas 29% of all men were eligible for PrEP at baseline, a further 18% met the eligibility criteria over time; the proportion remaining eligible at each follow up round remained steady at around 25%. Of the 380 men who met the eligibility criteria, 60% were eligible at baseline and 68% at 18 months, with 40% eligible at both timepoints. By 18 months follow-up, 118 men had commenced PrEP. Approximately half of those who commenced PrEP but reported no prior CLAIC reported CLAI with 'fuckbuddies' at the equivalent timepoint. At each round, among men eligible for PrEP, nearly half of those not using PrEP reported fewer than five partners in the previous six months compared with only about 5% among those using PrEP ($p < 0.001$). In multivariate analysis, compared with men who had commenced PrEP, eligible men not using PrEP had fewer sex partners, fewer gay friends, and were less engaged in gay community.

Conclusion: Despite meeting formal eligibility criteria for PrEP, less sexually active or less socially connected GBM were less likely to initiate PrEP. Some men may assess their risk as insufficient to warrant using PrEP. Also, less connection to gay community may restrict access to information about PrEP.

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