

COMEPREPD2DINE: EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EXPERIENCES OF PREP USE: AN INNOVATIVE 'DINNER PARTY CONVERSATION' APPROACH

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Background:

Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is an effective and accepted adjunct to the HIV prevention cascade. This study explored factors influencing the experiences and expectations of PrEP from the perspectives of Queensland PrEP users, non-users and People Living with HIV (PLWH).

Methods:

Using an innovative 'dinner party conversation' (DPC) approach, six focus groups were conducted. The DPC was hosted by a participant who invited people from their social network to dinner, creating a warm relaxed environment where people felt comfortable and safe to debate PrEP under the moderation of an academic and peer researcher. Thematic analysis of recorded DPC were conducted.

Results:

The DPC approach recruited a diverse sample (n=36) including gay and bisexual cis-men, trans and gender diverse people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, aged between 19-62 years. Seven were PrEP users, 25 non-users, three were PLWH. One had never HIV tested. Disparity in attitudes emerged between users [*it's a safety net*] and non-users [*it gives people licence to be irresponsible*]. However, PrEP was generally described as an *'evolution in sexual negotiation'* that was *'liberating and empowering'* people to make informed choices. A shift from the *'slut shaming'* and stigmatisation of users, toward non-users sensing new pressure to conform to use, or be seen as *'irresponsible to self and others'*, generated discourse on how PrEP was shaping community attitudes to condomless sex and *'sexual liberation'*. PrEP was *'opening conversation around HIV'* in a way that was *'diminishing negative connotations and stigma of HIV'*, making a *'noted shift in willingness to have sex with PLWH'*.

Conclusion:

The DPC successfully collected community viewpoints and allowed 'social networks' to express their attitudes and concerns about PrEP use, its impact both positive and negative on attitudes to condomless sex and HIV, in a manner that is distinct from traditional research techniques.

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