

Enabling PrEP uptake in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Background/Purpose:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) became publicly funded in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) for people at greatest risk of HIV in 2018. Despite high acceptability and demand for PrEP, current active PrEP users remain low at 25% of the estimated 5,847 eligible individuals. Prescriber bottlenecks and delays in accessing PrEP highlighted inefficiencies with the specialist prescriber process. Removing barriers and enabling equitable access to PrEP remain key issues to improve local provision of PrEP within NZ.

Approach:

The New Zealand AIDS Foundation's (NZAF) PrEP advocacy has focused on enabling equitable access through policy change, increasing PrEP prescribers in primary care, community and workforce education, and reducing barriers to accessing PrEP.

Outcomes/Impact:

At the end of 2019, following advocacy and discussion with the HIV sector PHARMAC, NZ's drug buying agency, revised the PrEP prescriber group. Initially limited to approved HIV specialists, it has expanded to include sexual health specialists, infectious disease specialists, vocationally registered general practitioners and nurse practitioners. These clinicians can now independently prescribe PrEP.

On the ground, NZAF has worked with the HIV sector to provide PrEP education and training for clinicians in primary care. A regularly updated PrEP map of prescribing PrEP GPs has also been made available on the NZ Ending HIV website along with information to educate and support gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to access PrEP.

Innovation and Significance:

Strong sector partnerships between the community, clinicians and government agencies has enabled changes to improve PrEP access. However, more work is needed to ensure equitable access to PrEP across NZ. Ongoing advocacy with PHARMAC recommends widening the PrEP eligibility criteria to connect more at-risk MSM, remove barriers to access and increase PrEP uptake.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

None