Inequities in PrEP use according to Medicare status in a publicly funded sexual health clinic

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Background

• HIV notification rates in NSW are declining
• People born overseas are disproportionately represented amongst people newly diagnosed with HIV in Australia
• Inequities around PrEP access may be a contributing factor
• Asian-born men without Medicare are over-represented among men who are willing to use PrEP but don’t
• Clients without Medicare are seen free of charge at Sydney Sexual Health Centre (SSHC) and can be given a private PrEP prescription to purchase online or in local pharmacies
• PrEP prescribing data in clients without Medicare are not captured in routinely collected PBS surveillance

Methods

• Retrospective analysis of routinely collected data from the SSHC electronic medical record 1 January to 31 December 2021
• Inclusion: first ever SSHC visit during 2021 AND eligible for PrEP
• PrEP eligibility definition: HIV negative transgender/cisgender men OR transgender women who have sex with men AND report <100% condom use for anal sex
• Initial visit data extracted: Self reported PrEP use described by SSHC, HIV test result, plus demographic and behavioural risk variables
• Descriptive statistics were calculated using frequencies and percentages
• Binomial logistic regression models were performed to test for associations between Medicare status and PrEP use

Results

PrEP use by Medicare status

• After accounting for demographics and behavioural risk (table 1), clients without Medicare were:
  • significantly less likely to be taking PrEP at the time of their initial consult
  • Less likely to be on PrEP at any time in 2021 than clients with Medicare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PrEP</th>
<th>adjusted p-value</th>
<th>odds ratio</th>
<th>95% C.I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently on PrEP at time of initial consultation</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>(0.25, 0.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented on PrEP at any time during 2021</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>(0.55, 0.97)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Associations between Medicare status and PrEP use

New HIV diagnoses in PrEP-eligible clients at SSHC

• 11 (0.8%) PrEP-eligible clients were diagnosed with HIV in 2021, all at the time of their first clinic visit
• Of these, 7 (63.6%) were born outside of Australia and New Zealand, predominantly from Asia or South America
• Most (6) overseas born clients had been in Australia for 4 years or less, and all were Medicare ineligible

Conclusions

• This study highlights a discrepancy between PrEP use in people with Medicare compared to people without
• Barriers to PrEP access in this group are not well characterized
• Publicly funded sexual health clinics are an important resource for PrEP access
• More work is needed to prioritise access and improve equity for people without Medicare