

## **FUNDED PREP AGAINST THE ODDS: THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE**

### **Authors:**

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### **Background/Purpose:**

The only New Zealand HIV and AIDS Action Plan is from 2003. As the world embraced combination HIV prevention, New Zealand political leadership was absent and we saw the highest rates of new diagnoses on record. In this policy vacuum, the New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF) led a national reframing of HIV prevention. The combination of prevention tools were integrated into NZAF prevention messaging and PrEP is recognised as having a critical role to play.

### **Approach:**

NZAF sought to ensure that the role of PrEP was understood by MSM and that appropriate pathways existed for uptake. Community Forums were delivered across the country, PrEP champions were empowered to advocate for change, an application for PrEP funding was lodged with New Zealand's medicines purchasing agency and a 2,289 signature petition called for an expedited funding decision. Clinical sector partnerships saw the development of an online learning course supporting clinicians to prescribe PrEP and the implementation of a PrEP demonstration project in Auckland.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

PrEP was publicly funded in New Zealand for those at high risk of HIV acquisition from 1 March 2018 at a cost of \$5 per three-month prescription. The percentage of MSM on PrEP has increased from 0.7% in November 2016 to 5.7% in December 2017 and the percentage who report knowing that PrEP is a daily pill that significantly reduces HIV transmission risk has increased from 40% to 78% over the same period.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

Achieving funded PrEP in New Zealand exemplifies the potential of community driven leadership, even in the absence of political will. Funding is a significant milestone but if the full potential of PrEP is to be realised then enabling policy and sufficient sector resourcing is urgently needed.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):**

*No interests to disclose*