Use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) associated with lower HIV related anxiety among Australian gay and bisexual men who are at high risk of HIV infection


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BACKGROUND, AIMS & METHODS

Background
• Many gay and bisexual men (GBM) report sex-related HIV anxiety, particularly during condomless anal intercourse with casual partners (CLAIC)
• PrEP is a highly effective biomedical HIV prevention strategy which may reduce HIV-related anxiety

Study objective
• Does PrEP use reduce HIV-related anxiety among high and low-HIV-risk GBM?

Methods
• In 2018, 1,574 non-HIV-positive men completed a Flux survey and answered questions about PrEP use and sexual behaviours
• Risk was assessed based on the Australian PrEP eligibility criteria
• Measured HIV-related anxiety on a newly-developed scale
  • After sex I sometimes get concerned I might have done something risky
  • I sometimes worry about HIV before having sex
  • When I’m having sex HIV tends to come to mind
• Multivariable logistic regression was used to estimate adjusted odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals for factors associated with PrEP use
RESULTS

- High-HIV risk (i.e. PrEP eligible) men who reported PrEP use had significantly lower HIV-related anxiety scores than non-PrEP users
  - Mean: 8.54 vs 10.42; aOR=0.91 (95%CI=0.85-0.97)

- Mean HIV-related anxiety was 8.85 (SD 4.01); 17% had no HIV anxiety

- Higher HIV-related anxiety was associated with:
  - Being aged ≤25 years (mean=9.59 vs. 8.35, p<0.001)
  - Reporting receptive CLAIC (mean=9.59 vs. 8.74, p=0.033)
CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

• PrEP use was independently associated with lower levels of HIV-related anxiety among men at high risk of HIV (“PrEP eligible”)

• PrEP use was not associated with anxiety among PrEP ineligible men – lower anxiety levels may be related to less ‘risky’ behaviours

• Reduced HIV-related anxiety is an additional benefit of PrEP use that could be highlighted in demand creation initiatives to increase PrEP uptake