

Characteristics of continuous and non-continuous HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) users: Results from the PrEP in NSW Transition Study

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Background:

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) persistence is important to ensure that periods of high HIV risk are covered by PrEP. In a cohort of PrEP-experienced gay and bisexual men, we examined PrEP use patterns and associations.

Methods:

Between August 2018-February 2020, previous *EPIC-NSW* participants completed 3 surveys, 6 months apart. We identified three groups: 1) continuous users (consistent PrEP without breaks); 2) intermittent users (reported PrEP breaks); and 3) discontinuers (no PrEP use for ≥ 6 months at final survey), then compared them using multinomial multivariate logistic regression.

Results:

Of 1,223 participants included in the analysis, 193 (15.8%) reported a break between *EPIC-NSW* and later PrEP use that lasted 1-5 weeks (58.0%), 6-12 weeks (19.8%), or 3-6 months (22.1%). The proportion of daily PrEP users reporting a >1-week break over the preceding 6 months increased from 19.0% at baseline to 26.2% in the final survey. Overall, 59.5% (n=728) were continuous users, 30.3% (n=371) were intermittent users, and 10.1% (n=124) were discontinuers. 95% of continuous users reported using PrEP daily and adherence remained high (97-98%). Among intermittent users, 33.2% reported PrEP breaks in the first survey, and 72.0% in the final survey. Common reasons for restarting were travel (24.0%) and having more sex (16.0%). Among discontinuers, common reasons for stopping were entering a monogamous relationship (46.0%), having less sex (35.5%), and health concerns about long-term PrEP use (15.3%). Compared to continuous use, intermittent use was associated with: ≤ 20 sexual partners (aRRR=2.53, 95%CI=1.86-3.44), non-gay identity (aRRR=2.16, 95%CI=1.30-3.60), younger age (aRRR=1.02, 95%CI=1.01-1.03), and lower income (aRRR=1.65, 95%CI=1.18-2.31). The same associations were significant when comparing discontinuers to continuous users.

Conclusion:

Most men continued using PrEP daily with high adherence and without any breaks over an 18-month period. Non-continuous users reported less sex, but more research is needed on PrEP coverage of specific sex events.

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