

HIV CASES HIT 15-YEAR LOW IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA (WA): HIV TRENDS IN THE MODERN ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART) ERA.

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Background: In 2014, a record number of new HIV cases were notified in WA (n=109). In the years that followed, prevention strategies focusing on 'treatment as prevention' (TasP) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) were implemented. This research describes the epidemiology of HIV and treatment uptake in WA following the implementation of these strategies.

Methods: HIV notifications and testing data from 2009 to 2018 were sourced from the WA HIV Database and pathology laboratories, respectively, and analysed to determine HIV notification and positivity rates. ART data provided by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) from 2015 to 2017 were analysed to describe trends in uptake. Key policy measures in HIV prevention over this period were also reviewed.

Results: From 2009 to 2014, the number of new HIV cases in WA increased 60% to 109 cases before decreasing 48% to 57 cases between 2014 and 2018, the lowest number in 15 years. HIV test positivity also decreased by 54%. The decline in HIV cases followed the implementation of several key national and state initiatives, including the removal of the CD4+ requirement from the PBS restrictions for initiation of ART in 2014; an integrated outreach model of care to support people living with HIV with complex needs in 2016; commencement of the WA PrEP trial in 2017; and a PBS listing for PrEP in 2018. In 2017, the estimated treatment coverage among people diagnosed with HIV increased to just under 90% (n=1,760).

Conclusion: The number of new HIV cases declined dramatically in WA following the implementation of TasP and PrEP-based strategies. It is likely that these prevention strategies contributed to a decrease in HIV transmission within WA and will continue to play an important role in the state's public health response to HIV.

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