

ENDING HIV IN NEW ZEALAND BY 2025

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Purpose:

Men who have sex with men (MSM) continue to be over-represented in HIV diagnoses in New Zealand, rising to the highest number ever in 2016. Growing international evidence suggested that re-calibrating the strategy towards combination prevention would help us realise our goal of ending HIV transmission by 2025. However, existing clinical services and policy settings were not aligned to this approach.

Approach:

In response the New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF) launched *Ending HIV*, a *he muka nō te taura whiri* combination prevention programme incorporating condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), scaling-up and improving accessibility to testing services, and encouraging early treatment for those diagnosed with HIV.

The aims of *Ending HIV* are to educate about new prevention tools, advocate for supportive policy, and empower MSM to join a social movement to end HIV transmission. This was achieved through behaviourally geo-targeted education, community workshops, upskilling clinicians, and public advocacy.

Impact:

A 5 year increase in locally-acquired HIV transmission among MSM reversed in 2017, new diagnoses declining by 30%.

The reasons for this decline are uncertain. However, since launch, NZAF has recorded:

- Stable 60% condom use with casual partners among MSM.
- Advocating for and achieving the removal of barriers to early HIV treatment.
- Advocating for and achieving public funding for PrEP.
- Increased PrEP use among MSM from 1% in 2016 to 6% in 2017.
- Increased the proportion of high-risk MSM who have tested for HIV in the last 12 months from 61% to 71%.
- Increased knowledge of Undetectable Viral Load as prevention from 55% to 67%.

Innovation and Significance:

The community response to the *Ending HIV* programme led to two significant policy changes: public funding of PrEP and removal of the CD4 threshold. It appears to be changing knowledge and behaviour among MSM. Ongoing monitoring of HIV diagnoses supported with behavioural surveillance are required to confirm trends in decreasing transmission and behaviour change related to combination HIV prevention.