

The impact of the free same-day pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV STArTer pack on PrEP uptake (initiation, continuation and discontinuation) in Australia: Preliminary results from a pilot two-arm randomised controlled trial.

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Background:

Lack of government subsidy remains a barrier to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) uptake among Medicare-ineligible men who have sex with men (MSM). Same-day PrEP initiation demonstrated high acceptability and feasibility overseas. We evaluated the impact of a PrEP STArTer pack on PrEP uptake among Medicare-ineligible MSM attending Melbourne Sexual Health Centre.

Materials and Methods:

This pilot open-label two-arm randomised controlled trial was embedded within routine care between August and December 2025. Medicare-ineligible MSM aged ≥ 18 , without HIV diagnoses, were randomised 1:1 into the PrEP STArTer or control arm. The PrEP STArTer arm received a free community co-design 30-day PrEP supply pack and a prescription for a 60-day supply. Controls received a 90-day prescription. No confirmed negative HIV test was required before PrEP initiation. This abstract reports preliminary data (62 participants in the PrEP STArTer arm and 57 controls).

Results:

Of 205 eligible MSM, two received indeterminate HIV results; one was HIV positive. Overall, 202 participants were randomised (101 per arm, with no difference in sexual behaviours between arms). Mean age was 27(± 4.8); 61 were born in Asia; and mean length of stay in Australia was 2.6(± 2.7) years.

In the PrEP STArTer arm, 50 initiated and continued PrEP, 7 did not initiate, and 5 initiated and discontinued PrEP. In the control arm, 43 participants initiated and continued PrEP, 4 did not initiate, and 10 initiated then discontinued. The main reason for non-use or discontinuation was not being sexually active.

Kaplan–Meier analysis showed that median time to PrEP initiation was shorter in the PrEP STArTer arm than in controls (9 days[IQR 2–31] vs 27 days[IQR 3–47]), although the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.19$).

Conclusions:

Preliminary findings suggest that a free, community co-designed same-day PrEP STArTer pack may reduce time to PrEP initiation among Medicare-ineligible MSM.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors reported no conflict of interest.