

# The 'prevention logic' of gay and bisexual men in the contemporary HIV epidemic Australia

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## Background:

Current behavioural research offers insights into the individual factors that influence the use of biomedical prevention, in contrast there is little research focussed on the cultural and social processes that underlie use of biomedical prevention. This paper addresses the gap by conceptualising 'prevention logic,' (that is the thinking) that underpins gay and bisexual men's (GBM) management of HIV as culturally produced.

## Methods:

The paper draws on two qualitative studies of newly diagnosed PLHIV conducted between 2018–2024. Of the 41 participants in these studies, 35 were GBM and only the data of the GBM in these studies were analysed for this paper. We analysed narratives related to the use of prevention and perceptions of HIV risk prior to acquiring HIV.

## Results:

Typically, men were aware of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with several having ever used it, including a small number who were using it at the time of HIV acquisition. In contrast, awareness that suppression of the virus through ARV therapy (UVL) in PLHIV prevented transmission to sexual partners had been low, prior to their own diagnosis. Among the men who were aware of UVL, a few described it as part of their 'prevention logic,' however, this was rarely enacted in a conscious way with HIV positive sexual partners.

A key finding of our analysis was that biomedical prevention strategies formed part of GBM's 'prevention logic,' even when they were not themselves using PrEP or UVL, in some cases implicitly perceiving themselves to be protected by its broader presence within GBM sexual cultures.

## Conclusion:

Our findings suggest that increasing, or even sustaining, current levels of biomedical prevention will require a better understanding of the cultural processes that shape 'prevention logic' alongside the insights offered by behavioural research in relation to the individual factors that influence the use of biomedical prevention.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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