



Assessing The HIV Prevention Needs Of Young Gay And Bisexual Men in the PrEP Era: Behavioural Trends From the GCPS

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BACKGROUND/AIMS & METHODS:

- Internationally, young gay and bisexual men (YGBM) are less experienced with sexual health services (Bumgarner et al., 2017; Mustanski et al., 2011).
 - In Australia, younger age is associated with lower PrEP awareness (Holt et al., 2016) and PrEP uptake (Hammoud et al., 2019)
 - Australian YGBM have been argued to be at greater HIV risk (Cameron, 2014)
 - This study aims to assess their needs and determine their relative HIV risk compared to older men.
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- GCPS – repeated cross-sectional surveys of men who have had sex with a man in the past 5 years or identifies as gay or bisexual.
 - **Age groups compared were between men aged 16-24 and 25-49 between 2014-2018 across all states**
 - Measures include questions on sexual health behaviours (consistent condom use, PrEP knowledge and uptake, testing) as well as demographic information (employment, education, sexual identity)
 - **Multivariate logistic regressions were performed on the most recent survey round in each state (either 2017-2018)**
 - Separate logistic regression models were also performed on YGBM and older men to assess trends over time

RESULTS:

- Compared to older men:
 - YGBM have **lower PrEP knowledge** ($p=.013$) and **lower PrEP uptake** ($p=.001$)
 - PrEP uptake has increased in both groups ($p<.001$) but at a more rapid rate in older men
 - YGBM have **similar levels of condomless anal intercourse with casual partners (CAIC)** ($p=.119$)
 - Both groups have increasing levels of CAIC over time ($p<.001$)
 - YGBM were **more likely to have never been tested for HIV** (22% of YGBM compared to 4.3% of older men)
 - Both groups have increased levels of testing BUT this was driven by PrEP users.
 - YGBM have **fewer sexual partners** and appear to be decreasing over time
 - YGBM are **less socially engaged with gay men** ($p<.001$) and are **less likely to be gay-identified** ($<.001$)

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

- Despite the concern, YGBM do not appear to be at a disproportionately higher HIV risk than older GBM.
 - Lower engagement in sexual services is partially mitigated by fewer sexual partners.
- However, there are a minority of YGBM that require support
- There also appears to be a widening gap on PrEP use between YGBM and older GBM.
 - Potentially due to perceived cost (YGBM have lower incomes) or self-perception of being low risk
 - Lower awareness
- Lower social engagement requires different approaches to reach this population. Implications for community-level health messaging strategies.
- The kids are alright, but we should still check in on them
 - Continued monitoring of YGBM is recommended to encourage safe sex practice earlier in life, as well as limit any growing disparities in risk between YGBM and older men