

## WHAT CAN ENHANCED SURVEILLANCE REVEAL ABOUT HIV PREVENTION MEASURES IN MSM WITH EARLY STAGE HIV DIAGNOSIS?

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**Background:** Achieving high coverage of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in high-risk people is a key HIV prevention strategy. Despite PrEP's success, not all those at risk are using it. We sought to understand how men who have sex with men (MSM) newly diagnosed with HIV understood effective prevention practices, focusing on PrEP, and how this may have affected their risk of acquiring HIV.

**Methods:** Enhanced surveillance data were collected for all people newly diagnosed during June to December 2018. We conducted a descriptive analysis in combination with standard NSW HIV surveillance data, focusing on HIV prevention practices, healthcare engagement and health literacy for those with evidence of early-stage infection.

**Results:** Enhanced surveillance data was available for 114 (66%) of 172 new HIV diagnoses. Of 114, 87 (76%) were MSM and 49 (56%) of the 87 had early-stage infection or a CD4 count above 500. Thirty-six (73%) of these MSM reported they had heard of PrEP, but only five had ever taken it. Thirty (61%) had at least an 'above average' HIV understanding, and 26 (53%) spent at least some time with gay men. Of 12 (24%) that used prevention methods other than condoms, 5 had used PrEP and 4 relied on contacts using PrEP. Most were engaged with healthcare, with 41 (84%) requesting a HIV test before their diagnosis and 36 (73%) contacting healthcare in the year prior to diagnosis.

**Conclusion:** Nearly three quarters of MSM with recently acquired HIV were aware of PrEP but did not access it, even if they believed they were at risk, instead relying on their partners. Many felt it would not happen to them, and better knowledge of PrEP would have prevented their infection. Altered messaging is needed, emphasizing those at risk cannot solely rely on others and should take control of their own protection.

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