

# THE USE OF HIV RISK-REDUCTION STRATEGIES BY GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN (INCLUDING TRANS MEN) ON PrEP: EXPERIENCES IN THE PrEPX STUDY

Murphy D<sup>1,2</sup>, Wright E<sup>3,4,5</sup>, Holt M<sup>1</sup>, de Wit J<sup>1,6</sup>, Lal L<sup>3,4</sup>, Lockwood J<sup>3</sup>, Stoove M<sup>4</sup>, Price B<sup>3</sup>, Ruth S<sup>7</sup>, Batrouney C<sup>7</sup>, on behalf of the PrEPX Study Team

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW <sup>2</sup> Dept of Gender & Cultural Studies, University of Sydney, <sup>3</sup> Department of Infectious Diseases, The Alfred Hospital, <sup>4</sup> Burnet Institute, <sup>5</sup> Department of Infectious Diseases, Monash University, <sup>6</sup> Utrecht University, <sup>7</sup> Victorian AIDS Council

**Introduction:** Although there has been a strong focus on rates of condom use after starting HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), little attention has been paid to the way in which other risk-reduction strategies might change—or be reconceptualised—in the context of PrEP.

**Methods:** In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted (Aug–Dec 2016) with a sub-group of 35 participants who had consented to be part of this optional component of PrEPX, a PrEP intervention study in Victoria. This analysis focuses on reflection of participants on their sexual practices before and after starting PrEP.

**Results:** The average age of these men was 35 years (range 22–68). Almost all had decreased or ceased condom use since starting PrEP. Some (mostly younger) men still had a strong commitment to condoms—regardless of actual use—and considered PrEP to be ‘extra’ protection.

Withdrawal and strategic positioning were not widely used either prior to—or after—starting PrEP. The use of undetectable viral load (UVL) seemed to increase in acceptability after starting PrEP. Among those who were already having condomless sex with HIV-positive partners, PrEP made them feel less concerned about HIV, although almost all still felt it was important that their partners had UVL. Similarly, among men who did not currently report any HIV-positive partners, almost all said they would ensure that any future partners had UVL.

Many men who reported condomless sex only with other HIV-negative men (serosorting) still followed this strategy after starting PrEP, and some excluded known positive men as potential sexual partners altogether. However, PrEP was considered an important back-up when disclosure did not occur and/or serostatus was assumed.

**Conclusion:** These accounts suggest that PrEP supports other strategies, namely UVL and serosorting. Although the actual prevalence may not have changed, these strategies have continued salience in the context of PrEP.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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