

PROMOTING PrEP AMONG OVERSEAS-BORN AND NEWLY ARRIVED GAY, BISEXUAL, AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (GBMSM): AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Background:

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is covered under Medicare (Australia's health insurance scheme for citizens and permanent residents) since 2018. However, many overseas-born and newly arrived gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) are ineligible for Medicare and must pay the full price of PrEP (approximately US\$32 – 100 per month) in addition to medical appointment and pathology fees. Additional barriers include low to no awareness of PrEP, concerns over the cost of PrEP without Medicare, and confusion over navigating the Australia's healthcare system. We explored participants' perspectives on increasing PrEP knowledge among this population.

Methods:

We conducted in-depth, semi structured qualitative interviews with 22 overseas-born and newly arrived (less than 5 years in Australia) GBMSM with varying PrEP use between February to September 2021. We conducted a reflexive thematic analysis to interpret the data.

Results:

The mean age was 30 years and the mean length of stay in Australia was 2.5 years. Participants resided in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Participants said that an easy-to-understand PrEP information in conversational English and community languages could increase PrEP knowledge. Key information to be addressed were the full cost of accessing PrEP without Medicare, navigating the Australia's healthcare system, and the safety of PrEP. Possible avenues to distribute these resources include hostels and bars, tertiary education providers, and health clinics. Participants also like to see community members being involved in a social media PrEP campaign, and for information to be fun, informative, and engaging.

Conclusion:

Involving overseas-born and newly arrived GBMSM in the development and implementation of a comprehensive PrEP campaign is important to ensure that information is relevant, easy to understand, and addresses some of their concerns. This has the potential to increase PrEP literacy and uptake among this population.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.