

AWARENESS, USAGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF DOXYCYCLINE POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (DOXYPEP) FOR PREVENTION OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS IN AUSTRALIA: INSIGHTS FROM A NATIONAL CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY

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Background:

The Australian Consensus Statement recommending doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (doxyPEP) for STI prevention was published in September 2023. Despite rapid uptake, little is known about whether use aligns with clinical guidance. This study examined doxyPEP awareness, and perceptions among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and trans and gender diverse (TGD) people in Australia.

Methods:

A national online cross-sectional survey was conducted from July to November 2024. Participants were recruited from 13 sexual health clinics, six general practices, social media, and dating applications. Eligible participants were aged 18 years or older, living in Australia, and identified as GBMSM or TGD people who have sex with men.

Results:

Among 2,095 participants, half (51.6%, 1080/2095) had heard of doxyPEP. Of those, 29.9% (323/1080) had ever used doxyPEP, and 28.3% (306/1080) were recent users. Awareness and usage varied by HIV status and PrEP use ($p < 0.0001$). Nearly two-thirds of users had taken the recommended 200mg within 72 hours after sex (63.5%, 205/323). Among recent users, 9.5% (29/306) reported recent syphilis diagnoses, and 27.8% (85/306) had two or more STI diagnoses in the past 12 months. Of ever users, 41.8% (135/323) obtained prescriptions from clinicians, 5.3% (17/323) obtained it online, and 8.7% (28/323) purchased it overseas without a prescription. Of those aware, 45.6% (490/1080) planned to use doxyPEP in the next 12 months, primarily to prevent chlamydia (93.9%), gonorrhoea (86.1%), and syphilis (78.8%). Some intended to prevent *Mycoplasma genitalium* (18.8%) or mpox (7.4%). Among non-users, 40.5% (306/756) worried about antibiotic resistance.

Conclusion:

DoxyPEP use is common but frequently occurs outside clinical guidance, with non-recommended regimens and unsupervised sourcing widespread. Misconceptions about efficacy persist, particularly for gonorrhoea, HIV, and mpox. Coordinated action between health departments and community organisations is needed to deliver evidence-based education, improve clinical access, and strengthen antimicrobial stewardship.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None