

WILLINGNESS TO USE PREP AND CONCERN ABOUT USING IT PLATEAUS AMONG AUSTRALIAN GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN AS PREP USE RISES: RESULTS OF THE PREPARE PROJECT, 2015-19

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Background:

We have tracked Australian gay and bisexual men's (GBM) attitudes to and use of PrEP since 2011. Up until 2017, willingness to use PrEP was increasing and concern about using it was falling. There has been speculation that willingness to use PrEP might plateau once the initial wave of early adopters started using PrEP.

Methods:

National online surveys of GBM were conducted April-May 2015, 2017 and 2019. We report trends in PrEP use, willingness to use PrEP and concern about PrEP use. Among GBM who were eligible for PrEP (according to prescribing guidelines) we report reasons for not using PrEP and preferred ways to take it. We used logistic regression to test trends.

Results:

3,592 GBM participated during 2015-19 (1,220 in 2019). Current PrEP use increased from 2.9% in 2015 to 36.2% in 2019 ($p<0.001$). Among eligible non-users, willingness to use PrEP was 41.1% in 2015, 48.7% in 2017 and 40.0% in 2019 ($p=0.820$), while concern about using PrEP was 32.4% in 2015, 28.7% in 2017 and 42.9% in 2019 ($p=0.027$). In 2019, of 167 eligible non-users, 31.6% indicated they intended to start PrEP in the next six months. The most common reasons for not using PrEP among eligible non-users ($n=212$) were concern about side effects (38.2%) or long-term medication (34.9%), not having enough sex (34.0%), and using condoms (26.9%). Among eligible non-users, the preferred ways to take PrEP were long-acting injections (34.0%), event-based dosing (22.2%), daily pills (21.7%), or implants (16.0%).

Conclusion:

As PrEP use has risen among Australian GBM, willingness to use it among non-users has plateaued. Concerns about side effects and long-term medication use

remain notable barriers to eligible GBM using PrEP. Alternative ways of taking PrEP may be useful for those without concerns about medication, with long-acting injections seen as more attractive than daily pills by eligible non-users.

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