



A content analysis of social media discourse following a case of seroconversion on PrEP

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No disclosures of interest to report

Outline

Background

- Seroconversion event

- Motivation

Methods

Results

- News articles

- Social media response

Discussion

Seroconversion Event

- Participant in the Victorian PrEPX study was reported to have seroconverted in May 2017
- News broke on social media soon after the event and was reported by major news outlets
- Generated considerable public interest and commentary about PrEP and PrEP users

Aim - To conduct a content analysis of the public discourse surrounding the seroconversion

Methods

- Exhaustive search of relevant Australian news articles and associated commentary
- Structural analysis of content of articles
- Comments publically available on social media on the articles were grouped into categories:
 - Fear-based responses
 - Critical of PrEP
 - Neutral
 - Supportive
 - Evidence-based information
 - Not applicable

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Media Coverage

The Sydney Morning Herald National

NEWS Sport Business World Politics Comment Property Entertainment Lifestyle Travel Cars

Retreat to a rainforest indulgence and tantalising dining experience
Bangun Tree Botan

NSW News National Environment Health Education Good Weekend Investigations Galleries Clique Photos

Home / News / Health

EXCLUSIVE MAY 22 2017 SAVE PRINT LICENSE ARTICLE

Melbourne man tests positive to HIV while taking preventative drug

Emily Woods, Henrietta Cook, Rania Spooner

A man has tested positive to HIV at a Melbourne clinic while participating in a trial of PrEP, an antiretroviral drug credited with preventing the spread of the disease.

60 YEARS OF ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY

VICTORIAN NEWS

VICTORIAN PREP TRIAL PARTICIPANT BECOMES HIV-POSITIVE

"Currently there are over 100,000 individuals who are taking PrEP globally as a way to protect themselves against HIV"

METHEW BAZE — MAY 22 2017



Reports have emerged that a participant in Victoria's pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) trial has seroconverted and become HIV-positive.

In a statement by the Victorian AIDS Council, it has been suggested there are two ways this may have occurred: either the person didn't properly adhere to their PrEP regimen, or they came into contact with a HIV-positive person with a detectable viral load who had a strain of the virus resistant to PrEP.

Chief Executive of VAC Simon Ruth said despite the news, the vast

SPRING OUT
CAMPAINS WITH A HEART FOR THE COMMUNITY

6 <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/melbourne-man-tests-positive-to-hiv-while-taking-preventative-drug-20170522-gwaavh.html>
<http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/victoria-news/prep-participant-positive/158473>

Results - Articles

SMH/The Age article

- Generated fear and scepticism of PrEP

This has sparked fears in the gay community about possible resistance to the medication - particularly after rumours about the strain circulated on social media over the weekend.

Star Observer article

- Measured, evidence-based information

the vast majority of people taking PrEP in Australia and around the world continue to be protected by the HIV prevention tool.

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Results - Articles

SMH/Age Article

- Some reassurance at the end of the article

"I don't think there is any reason for alarm here. PrEP works and any rare cases of failure need to be investigated fully..."

Star Observer Article

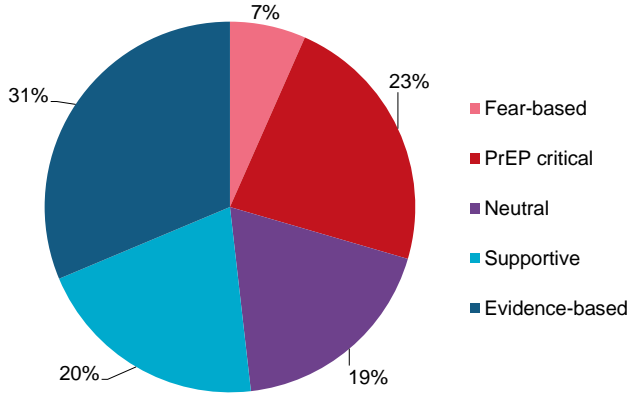
- Assertive, reassuring facts throughout

"To date there have been no confirmed cases in Australia of a person on PrEP being infected with a drug-resistant HIV."

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Results – Social Media responses

Breakdown of Facebook comments



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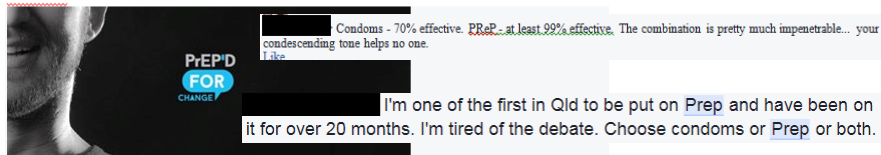
Results – Social Media responses

- Over 50% of comments were supportive of PrEP and PrEP users

People living with HIV in Australia have the same life expectancy as the general population, thanks to the vast array of well-tolerated antiretrovirals that are now available. No one has to live with every day. I'd implore you to do some research about PrEP for a place to ask questions and access the most up-to-date info.

What's more important is that at the end of all this social commentary there is a human being who has recently tested positive for HIV - and needs support and care, and most of all dignity and privacy while they take their next steps.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/126223771044150/>



Condoms and PrEP both carry a very minute risk. People who take this drug have made a conscious effort to take care of their sexual health.

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Results – Social Media responses

- Over 50% of comments were supportive of PrEP and PrEP users

*“Don’t you think it would have been **better to defer the reporting of this single case** to the general public in a non-medical forum until after resistance is confirmed or refuted?”*

*It **informs no one** at this stage as to the efficacy or risks of PrEP by reporting on a single case before confirming resistance, yet it **serves to bolster scaremongering amongst the ill-informed.**”*

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Results – Social Media responses

- Negative comments often included conservative or simplistic responses to PrEP and sex

“It’s time to ban this drug in australia [sic]. The best protection is either abstaining from risky behaviour or monogamy.”

“If it’s not wrapped then it’s not wrapped. Simple.”

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Discussion

- Significance of public discourses about PrEP
 - May reflect community engagement with PrEP and willingness to support its use
 - Bringing the issue into mainstream media
- Impact on government
 - Mobilising policy makers
 - Encouraging continued funding and support for PrEP

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Discussion cont.

- Supportive and evidence-based comments
 - Reflects work of HIV sector to engage people
 - High literacy in the community
- Role of social media in changing behaviours and viewpoints
 - Enables interaction with previously unreachable individuals/groups
 - Interactions between users brings a 'real life' aspect which can have significant impact

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Acknowledgements

Johann Kolstee

Garrett Prestage

Martin Holt

Bridget Haire

Social media commenters

