

LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS STIS AND STI RISK AMONG GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN USING PREP

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Background: STI diagnoses during the PrEPX study were highly clustered among gay and bisexual men (GBM) experiencing repeat infections. Understanding PrEP users' attitudes to STIs and how these vary across groups at differential STI risk will help inform effective STI prevention.

Methods: GBM enrolled in PrEPX completed a survey which asked questions on STI diagnoses, sexual behaviours and attitudes to STIs one year post-study. Attitudinal items included questions about perceptions of health impact of STIs, general concern about STIs, worry about and likelihood of acquiring STIs, and importance of avoiding STIs. A latent class analysis using binary covariates; seven attitudinal items (agree/strongly agree versus not), reporting an STI diagnosis since starting PrEP, never using condoms, and reporting >10 partners in 6 months, was used to characterise and quantify groups of PrEP users based on attitudes and STI risk.

Results: 1200 participants completed the survey; 753 (62%) reported an STI since commencing PrEP. Four classes of PrEP-using GBM were identified based on model fit and interpretability; lower STI-risk, less worried (LRLW;14%); medium STI-risk, medium worry (MRMW;20%); greater STI-risk, greater worry (GRGW;36%); greater STI-risk, less worried (GRLW;30%). The proportion reporting an STI since commencing PrEP were 14% (LRLW), 51% (MRMW), 75% (GRGW) and 79% (GRLW). Experiencing multiple STIs was commonest among GRLW participants (61%). Among the two "greater STI-risk" classes, attitudes varied considerably: 21% of GRGW and 76% of GRLW agreed "getting an STI is no big deal"; 96% of GRGW and 15% of GRLW "worried about getting an STI"; and 95% of GRGW and 60% of GRLW found avoiding STIs important.

Conclusion: Marked differences in attitudes towards STIs were evident among GBM at increased risk of STIs. Concern around STIs may be attenuated after experiencing multiple STIs, and further research is needed to understand the dynamically shifting attitudes to STIs in the era of PrEP.

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