

NZPREP: AN HIV PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT WITH EQUITY QUOTAS IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

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Background: In New Zealand (NZ), PrEP should target gay and bisexual men (GBM) and equity is an important principle. We describe baseline characteristics of GBM offered PrEP in NZ's first demonstration project with an enrolment quota of 50% non-Europeans.

Methods: We used an open-label single-arm treatment evaluation study design ("NZPrEP"). The settings were four publicly-funded sexual health clinics in Auckland in 2017. GBM were recruited from clinics, community sources and social media. Participants self-completed an online questionnaire about PrEP awareness, attitudes and sexual risk behaviour in the last three months. We describe baseline characteristics and examine whether these were associated with PrEP initiation status (self-referral versus doctor/nurse recommendation).

Results: We enrolled 150 GBM of whom half (52%) were non-European including 21.3% Maori, 19.3% Asian and 8.7% Pacific. Two-thirds (65.3%) self-referred for PrEP and a third (34.7%) were recommended PrEP by the doctor/nurse. Participants reported a high number of male condomless receptive anal intercourse partners (MenAICLR) (median 3, range 0-50), with 10% reporting 10 or more MenAICLR and 45.3% reporting group sex. In the previous year 65.3% reported a sexually transmitted infection (STI); 18% had rectal chlamydia or gonorrhoea at enrolment. Half (47.7%) had recently used drugs with sex, including 8.1% using methamphetamine. Participants recommended PrEP had lower education, lived less centrally and had higher STI prevalence than PrEP self-referrers ($p < 0.05$) but their risk behaviour was similar. A quarter (26%) believed they would contract HIV soon, 38% believed missing PrEP for a day wouldn't matter long-term, and 29% worried about becoming too dependent on PrEP. Sexual risk behaviour was similar across ethnic groups, however non-Europeans were more likely to worry about becoming PrEP-dependent ($p = 0.019$) and Asian participants had more prevalent rectal STIs ($p = 0.042$).

Conclusions: Early PrEP adopters in NZ have high HIV risk. Demonstration projects should consider equity mechanisms so that minorities can participate meaningfully.

Disclosure: Study medication and research nurse funded by Gilead Sciences. New Zealand AIDS Foundation funded the behavioural survey and analysis.

Theme B: Epidemiology, Public Health and Programme Science