

NURSE-LED PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PREP): A NON-TRADITIONAL MODEL TO PROVIDE HIV PREVENTION IN A RESOURCE CONSTRAINED, PRAGMATIC CLINICAL TRIAL

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Background/Purpose:

Before PrEP was funded through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in April 2018, state and territory Governments facilitated uptake through PrEP “access trials” as part of a comprehensive HIV response. The first and largest of these pragmatic, population-scale clinical trials was EPIC-NSW. To assist participating public clinics to rapidly enrol and follow-up a large number of participants and to facilitate access in regional public clinics without a doctor onsite, flexible models of care were encouraged including a nurse-led model.

Approach:

While the EPIC-NSW protocol allowed for nurse-led PrEP, NSW legislation also required a legal instrument issued by the NSW Ministry of Health to authorise nurse supply of PrEP in public clinics. The nurse-led model allowed trained and authorised registered nurses at participating public clinics to screen, educate, clinically assess, order tests and manage results for initiation and follow-up visits. Critically, they could then supply PrEP “in-clinic” to eligible participants either under a standing order or following a prescription by a doctor authorised under the study protocol.

Outcomes/Impact:

EPIC-NSW enrolled over 8000 participants at 27 clinics between March 2016 and December 2017. Ten of 14 participating local health districts implemented the nurse-led model with widespread support and no serious safety events reported. Nurse-led PrEP was instrumental the rapid enrolment of participants and assisting clinics to embed PrEP provision and follow-up into routine service delivery without additional resourcing.

Innovation and Significance:

Nurse-led and other non-traditional models are needed to expand PrEP access. Despite the success of nurse-led PrEP in EPIC-NSW and the significant contribution nurses make to sexual health care more broadly, there remain regulatory and other barriers to implementation as part of the universal healthcare system in Australia. The challenge is now to expand and evaluate nurse-led PrEP to build the evidence base.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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