

GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN WHO RARELY PRACTISE HIV RISK REDUCTION

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Background:

Recently, gay and bisexual men (GBM) in Australia have increasingly utilised pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV transmission. Meanwhile, HIV-positive men have reported increased use of antiretroviral therapy and consequent undetectable viral loads. However, a minority of GBM rarely use any strategies to reduce the risk of HIV transmission during casual sex. We assessed characteristics of these men to aid HIV prevention efforts.

Methods:

Data from HIV-negative and untested men from the 2017 Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey were analysed. Frequency of using risk reduction strategies was measured by participants' own subjective assessments. Participants who reported infrequent use of risk reduction strategies during casual sex (condoms, serosorting, PrEP, strategic positioning, undetectable viral load, partners' viral load, partners' PrEP use) were compared with regular condom users in relation to demographic characteristics, relationships, recent sexual behaviour, and drug use. Bivariate analyses were conducted using chi-square tests.

Results:

A total of 701 men were included in the analysis. Compared to regular condom users, infrequent risk reduction strategy users (17.7%) had completed less formal education (49.2% vs 61.4% university), reported fewer sexual partners in the past 6 months (49.2% vs 61.5% more than 5 partners), and were less likely to have been recently tested for HIV (54.8% vs 75.0% in the last 6 months). Condom users were more likely to have agreements with regular partners about using condoms for casual sex (48.3% vs 18.2%).

Conclusion:

Results suggest that men who engage in high risk sex practices tend to do so infrequently, however, there is a need to increase their frequency of HIV testing. There is also a need to encourage them to start implementing effective HIV prevention strategies. Intermittent or event-based PrEP might be an appropriate strategy for these men, if they recognise when they are at potential risk of HIV.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The Centre for Social Research in Health and the Kirby Institute are supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. The Sydney Gay Community Periodic Surveys are funded by the Blood borne virus Research, Intervention and Strategic Evaluation program of the New South Wales Ministry of Health. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study.