

# **GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PrEP IN AUSTRALIA: A SETTING OF HIGH ACCESSIBILITY**

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## **Introduction:**

Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is accessible in Australia and mainly used by gay and bisexual men (GBM). While most previous research has considered perceptions of hypothetical PrEP use and non-use among GBM, we explored perceptions of actual PrEP use and non-use among Australian GBM to inform future interventions to increase uptake.

## **Methods:**

The Flux Study is a national, online, prospective observational study of drug use among 3253 Australian GBM. A thematic framework analysis was conducted to analyse 720 free-text responses to the question 'Would you like to tell us what you think about using PrEP?'

## **Results:**

Most men were positive about PrEP for both themselves and the community. They felt it personally reduced anxiety about HIV, added extra protection, and enhanced sexual pleasure, particularly with regard to enjoying condomless sex. They also believed it was more broadly a 'responsible' course of action for the entire community. Others were troubled that PrEP was increasingly being used instead of condoms because they considered condoms the 'correct' way to prevent HIV, or expressed concern that PrEP does not prevent STIs. A few were personally concerned about or had stopped using PrEP due to short-term and perceived long-term side effects. Finally, some perceived that PrEP was changing how GBM negotiated sex, and raised questions about whether partners could be trusted if they said they were on PrEP.

## **Conclusion:**

In a context of subsidised accessibility, Australian GBM generally express positive views about PrEP, including that PrEP can enhance sexual pleasure by enabling sex free from deeply entrenched fears of HIV. While these are valuable findings to emphasise in interventions to increase PrEP uptake, reservations including concerns regarding potential side effects require attention and GBM need to be supported to practice and negotiate new ways of having safe sex.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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