

Size Matters: Scaling equitable PrEP access: Lessons from PrEP Access Now's national coupon scheme in Australia

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Background/Purpose:

There are significant disparities in access to HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in Australia, particularly for individuals who cannot afford PrEP. Community-led models may offer scalable alternatives to complement traditional healthcare pathways.

Approach:

PrEP Access Now (PAN) is a grassroots, community-led organisation that operates a national coupon scheme that provides PrEP for free to eligible applicants in partnership with pharmacies who donate PrEP. Several programmatic changes, including expanding pharmacy partnerships and process automation, were implemented to improve scalability and access. An administrative audit of PAN program data was conducted.

Outcomes/Impact:

The program experienced substantial growth, with 917 applications and 828 approvals in 2024, a 78% increase from 2023 approvals. The scheme has provided approximately \$62,100 worth of PrEP to applicants in 2024. Among all applications, the most common reasons applicants utilised the scheme were not having Medicare (n=319, 32.5%), financial hardship (n=221, 24.1%), and being a current student (n=414, 42.1%). Implementing process automation reduced approval time from approximately five business days to two by reducing the time to review each coupon from 25 minutes to 3 minutes. Refining processes have allowed scaling without requiring proportional increases in staffing. In addition to Green Cross Pharmacy who have supported the scheme since inception, we have also partnered with Ace Pharmacy to expand capacity. These partnerships have reduced time to receive medication, with some applicants receiving medication within 7 days of approval.

Innovation and Significance:

Community-led coupon schemes with support from partner pharmacies represent a scalable, low-cost intervention to improve equitable access to PrEP. By reducing reliance on clinician-mediated pathways and addressing cost as a barrier to PrEP uptake, such models may complement existing healthcare systems and contribute to national HIV prevention targets. This program demonstrates potential for community-led compassionate access schemes for eligible medications beyond PrEP through partnership with pharmacies.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

MT has received consulting fees from Gilead Sciences Ltd.