

Acceptability of HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis among HIV-negative Men who have Sex with Men in Switzerland. Insights of a Focus Group Study.

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Background

There are about 500 to 600 newly diagnosed HIV infections in Switzerland each year (2014: 519). Half of these are among men who have sex with men (MSM) whereby MSM represent approximately 3% of the sexually active male population (1). This highlights the fact that MSM are disproportionately affected by HIV.

Despite a wide range of interventions, the rate of newly diagnosed infections has remained relatively stable during the past few years. Thus the HIV Pre-Exposure-Prophylaxis (PrEP) is discussed as an additional prevention method targeting MSM.

So far, PrEP has not been approved in Switzerland and little is known about the acceptability of PrEP among Swiss MSM. Therefore, the main objectives of the study were

- to examine the acceptability of PrEP among MSM in Switzerland, and
- to identify relevant factors regarding the intention to use PrEP

Methods

Recruitment and sample

- Consecutive sampling: MSM, HIV-negative, residing in Switzerland, no previous PrEP-experience
- Recruiting channels: Online dating platforms and Facebook
Distribution of flyers at checkpoints, bars and partys
- Registration: Homepage with registration features (<http://www.prepstudy.ch/>)

Data collection

- 5 semi-structured focus group discussions with 23 participants (Dec 2014 - Feb 2015)
- Oral short description of PrEP:
Application, effectiveness, potential side and long-term effects, costs
- Discussions took place in German- and French-speaking cities of Switzerland (Olten, Zurich, Lausanne)
- 2 discussion leaders with broad knowledge of the topic (part of target group)
- Short questionnaire for socio-demographic characteristics

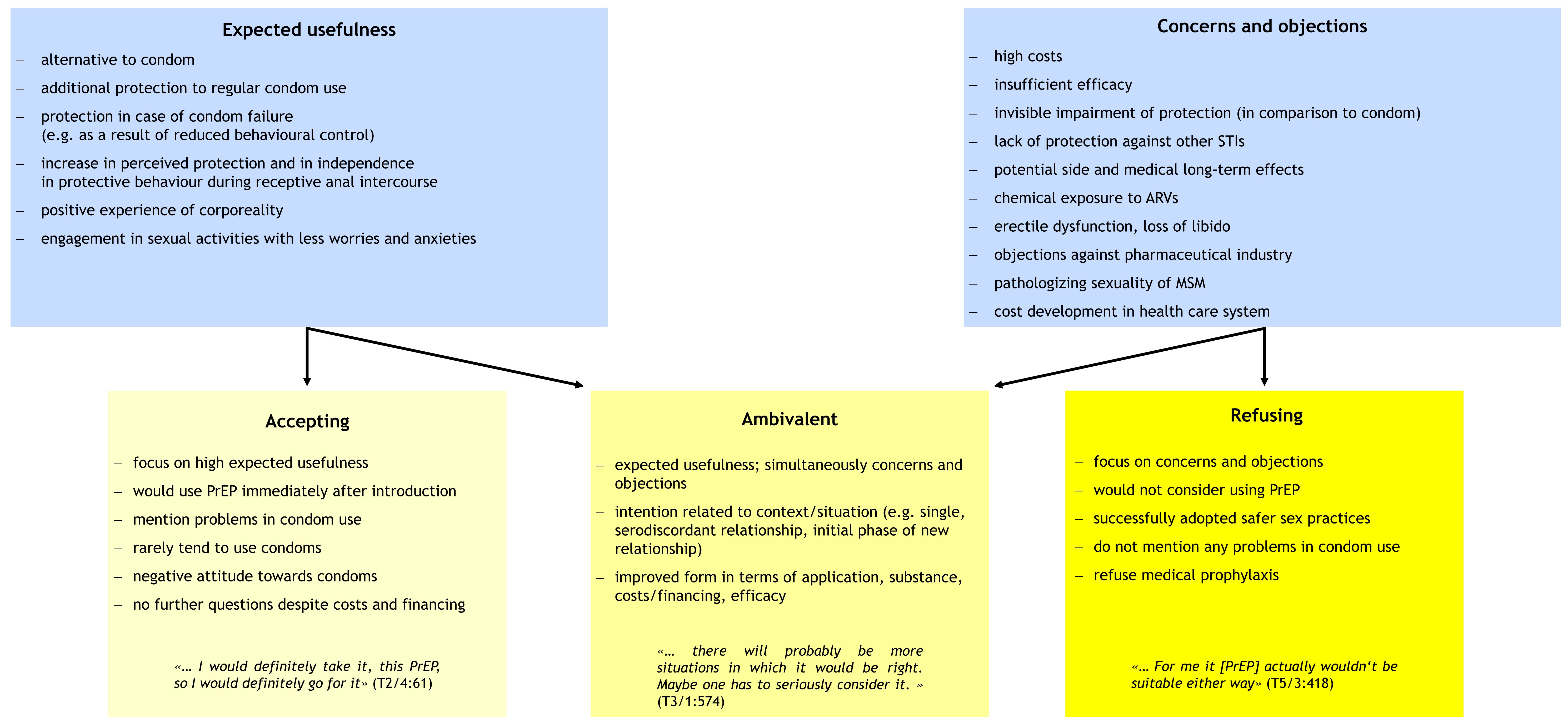
Analysis

- Focus group discussions were digitally recorded and fully transcribed
- Structuring qualitative content analysis (2)
 - o deductively developed categories on the basis of a theoretical acceptance model
 - o inductively developed (sub-)categories

Table 1: Description of sample (N=23)

Age	22-60 years
Sexual orientation	homosexual, bisexual
Relationship status	single, stable relationship, registered partnership, marriage
Educational level	vocational training to university degree
Occupational level	unemployed, full or part-time employment, student
Community type	cities, suburbs, rural communities
Monthly income (CHF)	0-15,000

Results



Conclusion

The acceptability and future adoption of PrEP varied considerably among the participants. MSM who are not able or not willing to use condoms consider PrEP as an option.

Ambivalent MSM formulate prerequisites regarding the context of use, the application, the costs, and further modalities on which they intend to base their decision.

MSM who do not mention any problems in condom use question the purpose of PrEP and show no intention to use it.

Various aspects of expected usefulness, concerns and objections regarding PrEP as well as the attitude towards and the experience in condom use seem to be relevant factors regarding the intention to use PrEP.

The results provide a valuable basis for a model explaining the acceptability of PrEP among MSM. In a next step, the identified factors will be tested in a quantitative follow-up study. The results contribute significantly to the discussion concerning the introduction of PrEP in Switzerland and its anticipated effects on HIV prevention.

References

1. Federal Office of Public Health. HIV- und STI-Fallzahlen 2014: Berichterstattung, Analysen und Trends. Bulletin. 2015(21):341-74.

2. Kuckartz U. Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung. 2. ed. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa; 2014.