Acceptability of Oral HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Among HIV-Negative Men Who Have Sex with Men in Switzerland

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

• Worldwide, Men having Sex with Men (MSM) are overrepresented among those newly diagnosed with an HIV-infection; in Switzerland, almost half of the new diagnoses are in MSM [1]. ⇒ The provision of adequate HIV-prevention offers for MSM continues to challenge health social workers and other health professionals.

• HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is discussed as an additional prevention option also for MSM; however, where PrEP is available, the uptake of PrEP among MSM seems to be slow [2].

• PrEP has not been approved in Switzerland and the acceptability of PrEP is unknown.

• A qualitative elicitation study indicated that the intention to use PrEP varies considerably (ranging from acceptance to ambivalence or rejection) among MSM in Switzerland and depends on a variety of factors [3].

This study seeks to determine the intention to use daily oral PrEP among HIV-negative MSM living in Switzerland.

METHODS

• Cross sectional design
• Anonymous, standardized self-administered paper-pencil and online questionnaire
• Convenience sample; recruitment through flyers distributed in bars and gay health clinics, advertisements in gay magazines and posts on various gay-specific dating web pages and Facebook
• PrEP acceptability was measured by one item about the intention to use PrEP according to the guidelines adopted by the US CDC; answer scale ranged from 1="extremely unlikely" to 7="extremely likely" to use PrEP
• Use of descriptive statistics to analyze the intention to use PrEP; Pearson correlations and paired sample t-test in order to measure bivariate effects [4]

RESULTS

The sample included 556 HIV-negative MSM living in Switzerland.

Table 1: Sample description (n=556)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation (n=555)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bisexual</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship status (n=556, multiple answers possible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable relationship with a man</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable relationship with a woman</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level (n=555)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-tertiary education</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tertiary education</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous knowledge about PrEP (n=556)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex with casual partners in the past 6 months (n=556)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI diagnosis/treatment in the past 6 months (n=556)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean score of the intention to use PrEP was 3.7 (SD=2.1).

39% of the MSM reported to be likely to use PrEP when available in Switzerland.

51% were unlikely to use PrEP in the future.

Only 10% were still undecided.

• The intention to use PrEP was stronger in MSM having had sex with casual partners in the last 6 months ($M=3.8$, $SD=2.1$) than in MSM with no casual partners ($M=3.0$, $SD=1.9$, $t=3.92$, $p<.001$).

• The intention to use PREP was stronger in MSM having been treated for a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) in the last 6 months ($M=4.3$, $SD=2.0$) than in MSM with no STI diagnosis ($M=3.6$, $SD=2.1$, $t=2.98$, $p<.01$).

• MSM with previous knowledge about PrEP showed a higher intention to use PrEP ($M=3.8$, $SD=2.2$) than MSM who had never heard about PrEP before ($M=3.3$, $SD=2.0$, $t=2.32$, $p<.05$).

• Higher scores in sexual high-risk behavior were positively associated with the intention to use PrEP ($r=.16$, $p<.001$).

• More positive attitudes towards condoms were negatively correlated with the intention to use PrEP ($r=-.29$, $p<.001$).

• Frequent negative experiences with condoms were positively associated with the intention use PrEP ($r=.29$, $p<.001$).

• Personal income was positively correlated with the intention to use PrEP ($r=.14$, $p<.001$).

• Respondents’ age and level of formal education were not significantly correlated with the intention to use PrEP.
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CONCLUSIONS

- The findings show only a moderate acceptability of oral PrEP among the respondents.
- The intention to use PrEP was stronger in MSM who had casual sex partners in the last 6 months, were treated for an STI in the last 6 months and had knowledge about PrEP prior to the survey.
- Income, sexual risk behavior and negative experiences with condoms were positively correlated with the intention to use PrEP.
- Positive attitudes towards condoms were negatively associated with the intention to use PrEP.

Limitations:
- Non probability sampling strategy; possibly entailing an education bias
- The study surveyed a hypothetical question, since PrEP has not been approved in Switzerland.

Outlook:
- Further research is needed to elicit and model the factors influencing MSM’s intention to use PrEP.
- Research is needed to examine the relationship between the intention to use PrEP and actual PrEP use.

REFERENCES


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