



Knowledge About PrEP Among MSM and Trans* Methamphetamine Users in Seattle

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Abstract

Background: Men who have sex with men (MSM) who use crystal methamphetamine (meth) are at particularly high risk of HIV acquisition. However, meth-using MSM are under-represented in PrEP programs in Seattle, WA. It is critical to understand the knowledge of and concerns about PrEP in this population to better target effective HIV prevention services.

Methods: In August 2016 we administered an anonymous, online, 17-item survey to meth users. Respondents were recruited by peer educators from Project NEON, a harm reduction program for gay, bi, and trans* male meth users. Eligibility criteria included reporting cisgender male or trans* identity, sex with male or trans* partners in the past year, meth use in the past 3 months, and negative or unknown HIV status. The survey collected demographic characteristics, frequency of meth use, and knowledge of PrEP and barriers to use. Participants were sent a \$10 gift card for survey completion.

Results: The majority of the 221 participants identified as male (97.7%) with a median age of 31 years (IQR 25-35, range 19-53). 84.2% reported having sex only with men, 9.1% with men and women, 5.4% with men and trans* partners, and 1.4% with women and trans* partners. 159 participants were white (71.9%), 46 were black (20.8%), and 16 reported other racial identities (7.2%). Approximately one-third were currently homeless (35.8%), 214 participants had insurance (96.8%) and, of those insured, 79.0% had Medicaid and 20.1% private insurance. 6.8% participants reported using meth daily, 77.8% weekly, 13.1% monthly, and 2.3% less frequently.

The majority of respondents had "heard of PrEP before" (96.4%); however, only 7 had ever used it (3.3%). Out of the 206 who had heard of PrEP but not used it 93.2% knew where to access PrEP. Despite the rare use of PrEP in this high-risk population, most participants reported no concerns about it (58.7%). Of the 88 reporting concerns, the most common were that it would not prevent HIV (47.7%), meth may impact PrEP's efficacy (31.8%), and that it would not be safe to use while using meth (30.7%).

Conclusions: A high number of participants had heard of PrEP, knew where to access it, and did not have insurance-related barriers to PrEP. Despite this, a very small minority had ever used it. Additional research is needed to assess what education about PrEP may be needed for meth users and understand barriers to uptake in order to increase access to effective HIV prevention services among the highest-risk individuals.

Background

- Cisgender men and trans* who have sex with men (MSM/MTG) who use crystal methamphetamine (meth) are at particularly high risk of HIV acquisition. Public Health – Seattle King County (PHSKC) has estimated that MSM who use meth are 5 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV than non-meth-using MSM.¹
- Daily, oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with Truvada is a highly-efficacious strategy for the prevention of HIV in adults. Annual survey results in Seattle among MSM show that PrEP use is increasing, with 23% of high-risk MSM surveyed in 2015 reporting currently taking PrEP and 31% reporting ever taking it.²
- However, despite overall high interest in PrEP among MSM, there is a smaller than expected number of meth-using MSM who are enrolling in local PrEP programs.
- It is critical to understand the knowledge of and concerns about PrEP in this population to better target effective HIV prevention services to the highest-risk individuals.

Methods

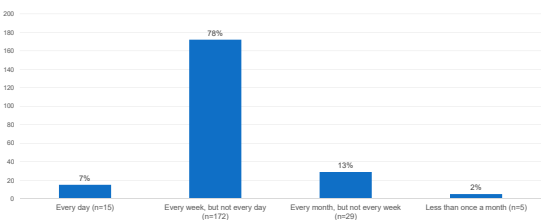
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Eligibility criteria:

- cisgender male or trans* identity,
- sex with male or trans* partners in the past year,
- meth use in the past 3 months, and
- negative or unknown HIV status.

Results

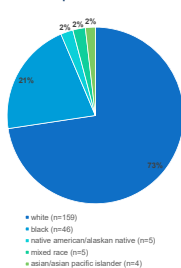
About how often do you use meth?



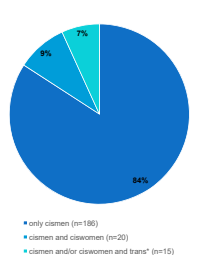
Results

Characteristic	Participants	
	n	% or IQR
Gender		
Cisgender male	216	98%
Transgender female	5	2%
Median age (years)	31	25-35
Currently homeless	79	36%
Has insurance	214	97%
Medicaid	169	79%
Private	44	21%

Respondents' Race



Gender of Sex Partners in Past Year

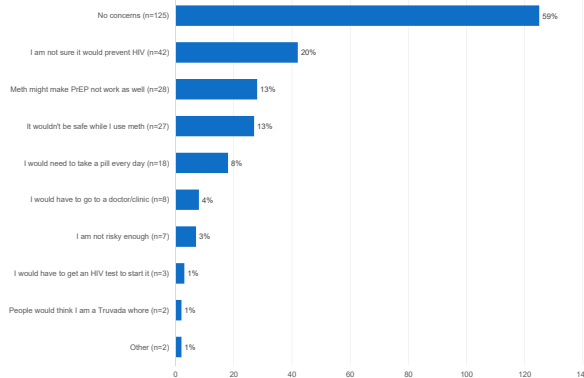


Heard of PrEP = 213 (97%)

Used PrEP = 7 (3%)

Know where to get it = 192 (93%)

What concerns do you have about using PrEP to prevent getting HIV?



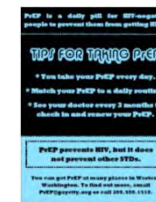
Results

Where would be the best place to get PrEP?

Kelley- Ross Pharmacy (pharmacy-based PrEP)³ = 62 (29%)
 Madison Clinic (HIV treatment clinic at UW) = 59 (28%)
 Gay City (LGBT wellness center)= 34 (16%)
 My doctor = 31 (15%)
 Country Doctor (non-profit primary care clinic)= 14 (7%)
 STD Clinic (county public health clinic) = 13 (6%)

Ongoing Activities

Since August 2016 we have held focus groups with the NEON peer educators to better understand barriers to uptake and persistence among MSM/MTG who use meth. We are currently conducting in-depth interviews with the target population to further explore PrEP use in this population. We have also collaborated with the NEON peer educators to develop culturally-appropriate educational materials about PrEP for MSM/MTG who use meth. These materials focus on the safety and efficacy of PrEP during concomitant meth use in response to our survey findings and focus groups with the educators. We distributed these educational materials in December 2016 and will conduct a final focus group with the educators and survey among their contacts in spring 2017 to assess the reach and impact of these materials.



This qualitative work has elucidated some additional barriers to PrEP use among meth-using MSM/MTG, including challenges with appointment attendance, perception of low risk, and fear of stigma related to meth use.

*"...with meth users, the appointment thing [is] a problem... I know someone who's been wanting to get on PrEP. He... understands everything about the concept and has had three appointments to go in and do it, but has not made those appointments. And... it's just a timing issue, but you have to plan in advance."
 (Focus Group)*

*"I don't know that I'm also high enough risk. Because I don't really have that much sex outside, like, my relationship at all. However, my partner is HIV positive so, I guess... there's a risk there for sure."
 (Interview)*

*"I make sure my doctor doesn't know that I use meth... I would never admit to it. I mean, if you do, I mean there's all sorts of consequences...."
 (Focus Group)*

Conclusion

A high number of participants had heard of PrEP, knew where to access it, and did not have insurance-related barriers to PrEP. Despite this, a very small minority had ever used it. Additional research is needed to assess what education about PrEP may be needed for meth users and to understand barriers to uptake in order to increase access to effective HIV prevention services among the highest-risk individuals.

Acknowledgments

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