SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ENHANCE RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG THAI MSM INTO PREP INTERVENTION

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BACKGROUND

Engagement of HIV at-risk young persons who might benefit from PrEP is an urgent prevention priority. Young male sex workers (MSW) aged 18-26 in Bangkok, and Pattaya, Thailand, are at very high risk for HIV acquisition and have had low rates of PrEP use.

COPE is an NIH funded Thai-US collaborative effectiveness and cost effectiveness intervention for young Thai MSW recruited through venue, street, and community outreach; HIV VCT referral; and a web-based portal.

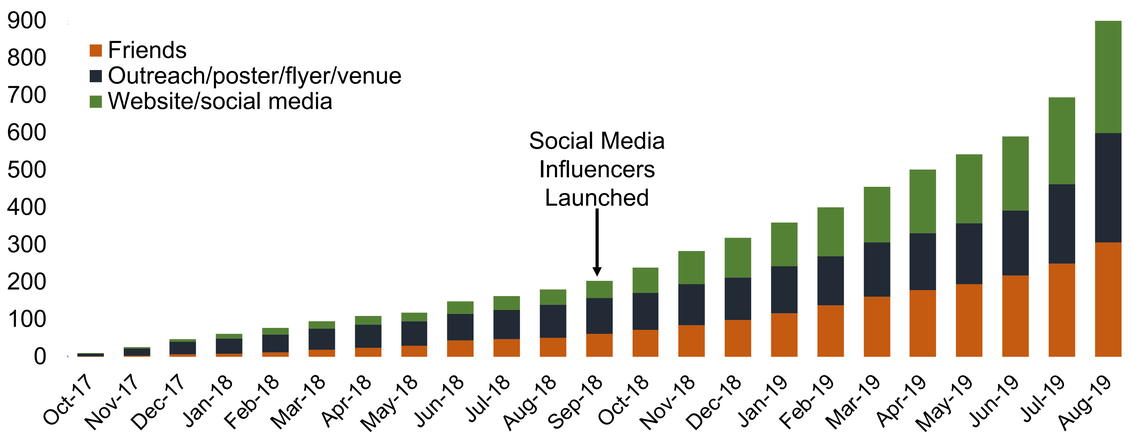
METHODS

- Eligible Thai MSW selected a prevention package with or without daily oral Truvada for PrEP and could stop or start PrEP at any time.
- SMS messaging was used to support adherence and collect weekly PrEP use data.
- Enrollment in the first 12 months averaged 17/month—too slow to meet study aims (23.0% reported learning of the project through social media).
- In September 2018, a social media influencer (SMI) campaign was launched with community partner, APCOM.
  - Short, (< 1 minute) scenario-based videos were developed with MSW-specific content and were promoted by hired SMI with combined reach to over 5 million Thai LGBTQ followers.
  - Recruitment sites were also expanded to 3 community partner locations convenient for MSW.
- Poisson interrupted time-series analysis (ITSA) was used to estimate the impact of SMI on monthly recruitment, including coefficients to capture change in intercept and change in slope. We excluded the last 2 months of recruitment due to high enrollment prior to cessation.

Social media influencers increased engagement and enrollment of young, at-risk MSM and TGW into the COPE4YMSM combination PrEP study.

RESULTS

- 82% increase in monthly recruitment following the start of SMI promotion (Poisson ITSA; 95% CI = 31%, 154%; p < .001)
- N = 900 men enrolled (avg. 63.3 men/month; September 2018 – August 2019).
- 17,393 website views between SMI intervention implementation and enrollment close (September 2018 – August 2019).
- 36.4% of later recruits reported learning of the study through social media.
- 75% of MSW participants chose a combination prevention package with Truvada for PrEP.



CONCLUSIONS

Social media is a key platform for health messaging and outreach. SMI further extend this reach by serving as credible advocates of the desired messaging with high relatability and followings within target communities.

In the COPE study, the impact SMI on study recruitment and initiation of PrEP was immediate and sustained. The success of the COPE campaign corroborates the use of SMI to increase engagement and enrollment for at-risk individuals marginalized from traditional health structures.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Study promotional videos available on Youtube:

1. Apollo Men's Massage: https://tinyurl.com/apollomen
2. Happy Birthday: https://tinyurl.com/birthdayprep

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