PrEParating Women to Prevent HIV Acquisition: An Integrated Theoretical Framework for PrEP Provision

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Early conversations 2016
Cisgender and Trans women

- Initial HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) conversations revealed assumptions that women do not take risks

- HIV risk perception - women not always aware of their own risk

- Intimate partner violence increases acquisition of HIV, yet the focus in early conversations was limited to solely that, which portrayed women as disempowered victims

- No information tailored to meet the needs of cis and trans women
Healthcare workers’ perception of women’s HIV risk
How many attendees with STI related needs are offered and tested for HIV in sexual health services in England

Background
In 2018, over 1.3 million HIV tests were carried out in sexual health services in England. Despite this, there were many missed opportunities for HIV testing.

The BASHH standards recommend that 97% of attendances with STI-needs should be offered an HIV test and 85% of attendances should have an HIV test recorded.

Percentage of attendances tested for HIV, by sexual orientation, all SHS, 2018

Data source: GUMCAD data
Results

CLEAN slide Results: The percentage of STI-need attendance episodes with offer of an HIV test and tested for HIV

Data source: GUMCAD service data
HIV testing and promotion of PrEP

PHE data show that in 2018, there were 213,003 missed opportunities to offer an HIV test, of which 64% were in heterosexual women.

These data suggest that HCPs perceive women as being at lower risk of acquiring HIV than men.

This has implications for PrEP provision for women, since if HCPs do not perceive them to be at risk, they are unlikely to discuss or offer it.
“Invisible No Longer” Findings (2018)

PrEP has largely been seen as an intervention for gay men - in media, HIV advocacy and policy making.

There is evidence to suggest that many women at the highest risk of acquiring HIV (e.g. Black Africans) do not attend sexual health services.

PrEP access for women is relatively recent in the UK, and uptake has been limited. While awareness of PrEP among women who responded to our Prevention Survey was high, (74% of women had heard of PrEP), no women had actually used it.

There have been some community initiatives to promote PrEP information to women, but more resourced action is urgently needed.

Barriers to accessing PrEP

- Lack of knowledge of the effectiveness of PrEP as a prevention method for HIV and its availability for women

- For many African communities, the word “trial” equates to being a guinea pig – ‘we’re being tested on’

- Stigma associated with PrEP

- Challenges in getting information about PrEP beyond the HIV sector

- Criminalization of sex workers is a barrier to accessing PrEP through clinic settings

- Women's understanding of their own risk

- Lack of understanding of women’s risk and conversations that need to happen

- Trans individuals describe experiences of transphobic abuse and violence when travelling on public transport, a significant barrier to accessing PrEP in clinical settings
Partnership Work

- Women and PrEP IMPACT trial group


- Developed website [www.womenandprep.org.uk](http://www.womenandprep.org.uk) in partnership with CliniQ, ATHENA and Forum Link

- Africa Advocacy Foundation [www.prepandprejudice.org.uk](http://www.prepandprejudice.org.uk)

- NAZ Soul Sisters Project training Violence Against Women organisations in sexual health [www.naz.org.uk](http://www.naz.org.uk)

- GMI partnership and PrEPster – PrEP champion report [www.prepster.co.uk](http://www.prepster.co.uk)

- MobPrESH – PrEPster Community PrEP champion initiative

PreP protects women from HIV… even if we don’t use condoms.

This leaflet is for all women who have sex with men, including trans women. It was written by women for women.

PreP is a pill that contains two drugs: tenofovir (TDF) and emtricitabine (FTC). PreP is a daily pill. In women, PreP takes about 1 week to reach protective levels. Missing one pill a week is okay, but taking every day is best.

PreP is more than 99% effective so long as you take it at least six days every week.

PreP can help you enjoy without worrying about HIV.

PreP can be used for any job in the sex industry, including: sex work, transfeminine sex work, sex work with HIV-positive clients, and sex work with sex workers who offer the sexual health benefits and clients might not expect. PreP will protect against HIV if you are empowered to not use condoms. Ngapato services that are free from stigma and judgement are available and recommended.

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For more copies of this leaflet, and a website for women: sophia@london.gov.uk womenandprep.org.uk

Tips for taking PreP
- Pick the best time to take PreP and get into a routine.
- Keep an adminstration diary to mark each day.
- Use a pill box. This is simple and easy to know if you have taken or missed your PreP.
- Take a pill at the same time each day.
- Use your phone to set an App.
- Roughly 6 days a week (not missed) is better than none.

For more information on interactions between antiretroviral treatments and other HIV drugs, visit Liverpool University: info@liverpool.org.uk

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Conclusions

- **Risk assessment for women is much more complex** than for MSM for whom clear indicators of HIV acquisition exist (rectal STI, syphilis, presentations for PEP and condomless anal sex).
- **When discussing HIV risk with women, it is likely that framing this in the context of overall sexual and reproductive well-being will be a more effective strategy than in terms of HIV risk alone.**
- **Crucial to create an atmosphere of trust** to ensure that conversations yield information that will lead to effective outcomes.
- **Language** should be tailored specifically to particular women/communities to ensure that messages are correctly understood. **This can only be achieved by directly engaging with individuals and communities.**
- **There is no one model or approach that will work for PrEP education, take up and commissioning of PrEP.**
- **Co working amongst HCP and community orgs and activists is essential if we are to ensure ALL can learn about and access PrEP who need it.**
Thank you
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