Mitigating the Effects of Stigma on PrEP Uptake, Adherence, and Persistence

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INTRODUCTION

• PrEP is the use of ARVs to prevent HIV acquisition by someone who is HIV negative but at substantial risk of acquiring HIV.
• In May 2017, Kenya launched a national Prep scale up program.
• Uptake has been progressive, but slow among some sub populations, and overall continuation rates consistently low.
• Stigma has been sighted as a substantial barrier during Prep in many clinical trials and demonstration projects.
• Prep is socially discrediting because of both what it is and what it does.

Prevention science: the official journal of the Society for Prevention Research. 2017;18
2021 HIV EPIDEMIOLOGY IN KENYA

42% adult new HIV infections occur among Adolescents and Young People (15-24 years)

Adolescent (10-19 yrs) PLHIV 99,159 New Infections 5,294
Young adults (15-24 yrs) PLHIV 173,228 New Infections 11,229

78,465 Children living with HIV (0-14)
1,350 Adults living with HIV

Kenya Hiv guidelines 2022
Despite many people being eligible for prep at the screening desk, only a few initiate Prep.

Majority of this has to with the stigma associated with Prep.
SOURCES OF PREP STIGMA

- Policies, programs, research agenda
- Sexual partners
- Health care workers
- Peers
- Community

FORMS OF PREP STIGMA

• **Product stigma**

*I have kept it a secret because the bottle is similar to that of ARVs. Someone who doesn’t know could think you have HIV."* – 20-year-old young woman

• **Behavioral stigma**

*My mother told me I have taken those drugs because I want to be a prostitute..."* 22-year-old young woman

• **Identity stigma**

In a recent meta-analysis of Prep acceptability among men who have sex with men (MSM) indicated that Prep related stigma was a significant barrier to acceptance worldwide
HOW TO MITIGATE PREP STIGMA

Policy and program level

- We need to adopt a user friendly approach that does not stigmatize prep use

Capacity building

- Train HCWs on Prep delivery of service that is stigma free
- Risk compensation attitude

Advocacy/proper messaging

- Provide targeted messages to the priority populations
HOW TO MITIGATE PREP STIGMA

More options available

Private pharmacy model

Integration of prep in other SDP

Jhpeigo private pharmacy delivery model
LESSONS LEARNT

• Prep education, training and attitude change is important to mitigate stigma

• Integration of prep to other service delivery points increases prep uptake

• Community involvement, advocacy and liberalization of Prep delivery will help mitigate stigma
There is compelling evidence that PrEP stigma directly impacts its scalability as a prevention strategy, including the pace of uptake, rates of adherence and persistence, and disparities in dissemination among highest priority populations.

Reducing PrEP stigma and its negative impact on the epidemic requires a significant shift in perspective, language, and programs.


Big Thank You!