

Attitudes towards PrEP among drug-involved men under community supervision with their female partners in New York City

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Background & Significance

Drug-involved men under community supervision are at elevated risk for HIV acquisition. There is an urgent call to action to develop, test and implement novel HIV prevention interventions that reduce HIV transmission and are acceptable in this vulnerable population. This study aims to examine the acceptability for using pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), an FDA-approved HIV-prevention medication developed to keep HIV-negative individuals safe from contracting the infection, among drug-involved men under community supervision and their primary (main) cis-gender female sexual partners in New York City.

Results

Of the sample, 51% identified as male (N=196) and 49% identified as female (N=194). The average age was 35 (SD12.98). The majority identified as Black/African American (72.4%). Almost sixty percent (59.1%) were single or never married. 68% were unemployed and 40.4% earned less than \$400 per month. Nearly one-fourth (25.9%, n=102) of the participants were very likely to use PrEP as an HIV prevention method; at least one-third of the participants reported being very willing to disclose using PrEP to their main sexual partner and were similarly highly likely to use PrEP as a daily medication (38.3% and 38.8%; n= 151; 153 respectively).

Methodology

Utilizing 12-month data from a couple-based HIV study for drug-involved men under community supervision and their main sexual partners, 460 participants met inclusion criteria of the study (aged 18 or older, in relationship for 3 or more months, reported unprotected sex in the past 90 days, reports drug use or enrolled in a drug treatment program in the past 12 months) and were randomized. 390 participants (85%), completed the 12-month follow-up assessments. We collected data on PrEP pertinent question(s):

- (1) Likelihood to use PrEP as a form of HIV prevention; willingness to use PrEP if made available for daily use;
- (2) Readiness and willingness to disclose use of daily PrEP to their main partner; and
- (3) Using condoms alongside daily PrEP. Responses were rated as “very unlikely”, “unlikely”, “somewhat likely” and “very likely”.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the couples who participated in our study, and whose lives are affected by grave adversities. Our work at SIG, including the current project is dedicated to improved health in the communities we serve.

TABLE 3. Preference of PrEP use (in “likelihood”) by Income Group

	Income Spread	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	TOTAL
What is your total household monthly income? (Choose one)	Less than \$400 per month	44	42	30	42	158
	\$400-\$850 per month	33	27	30	35	125
	\$851-\$1650 per month	23	10	22	18	73
	\$1651-\$2500 per month	4	7	3	6	20
	\$2501-\$3300 per month	3	4	1	1	9
	\$3301-or more per month	3	2	0	0	5
Total		110	92	86	102	390

TABLE 1. If PrEP is available to you how likely would you be willing to tell your partner

	Total (N=394)	Percent
Very unlikely	87	22.1
Unlikely	71	18.0
Somewhat likely	81	20.6
Very likely	151	38.3
Missing	4	1.0
Total	394	100.0

TABLE 2. If PrEP is available to you, how likely would you be willing to use PrEP as an HIV prevention method?

	Total (N=394)	Percent
Very unlikely	110	27.9
Unlikely	92	23.4
Somewhat likely	86	21.8
Very likely	102	25.9
Missing	4	1.0
Total	394	100.0

Conclusion

Findings suggest that PrEP may be an acceptable and useful form of HIV prevention among drug-involved men under community supervision with their female sexual partners. However, there is an urgent need for more PrEP studies to better understand the barriers and attitudes to PrEP and integrated HIV prevention and treatment among this vulnerable population.

Future Directions

The study focuses on attitudes towards PrEP and not its use. Despite, this limitation the findings have important implications for future research on acceptability and promotion of PrEP among high-risk couples involved in the criminal justice system, who still remains understudied. Research on acceptance, awareness and promotion of PrEP for primary HIV prevention is important among men and their female sex partners involved in the criminal justice system.