

The 29th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research Le 29e Congrès annuel canadien de recherche sur le VIH/sida

Session: **EPH4**: Sunday May 3 – 11:00:12:30 – HIV PrEP

Track: Epidemiology and Public Health
Subject: HIV Prevention and Control Programs Towards key Populations - Implementation and Program Science
Presentation Type: Oral
Title of Abstract: **PrEP uptake amongst MSM accessing sexual health services in Ontario and British Columbia - Results of the PrIMP Community Survey**

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Abstract

Background:

Pre-exposure Prophylaxis is recommended for Canadian gbMSM at high HIV risk MSM. In Ontario (ON), PrEP has been partially publicly funded since 2017 while in British Columbia (BC) it has been fully funded for those meeting high-risk criteria since January 2018. We evaluated PrEP use amongst gbMSM sexual health services by Province.

Methods:

gbMSM attending sexual health clinics were invited to participate in an online questionnaire between July 2019 and December 2019, assessing HIV risk, PrEP knowledge and use. We summarized responses using descriptive statistics and compared responses in BC and ON using chi square test.

Results:

Overall 435 individuals completing the survey (n=290 in BC, 145 in ON). The median age was 31 years (Q1Q3 26 – 39 years), 73% identified as gay, and 49% as white. Regular HIV testing at q 1-6 month intervals was reported by 77% of those in BC vs 54% in ON ($p < 0.0001$). Of those with response, 31% had experienced gonococcal infection in the prior 6 months, and 13.8% had had syphilis. Overall amongst 413 individuals with response, 38% had ever used PrEP, of which 85% were current users. More BC than ON respondents had ever used PrEP (47% vs. 21%, $p=0.0001$), while fewer BC than ON respondents cited medication costs as a reason for non-use (5.4% vs 35%, $p < 0.001$); similar proportions reported concerns about side effects (34% vs 37%, $p 0.60$) and believing themselves to be at low risk (32% vs 33%, $p=0.72$).

Conclusions:

Use of PrEP amongst gbMSM accessing sexual health clinics in BC and Ontario was modest at 38% overall, but higher in BC than Ontario. Cost of medications was identified in Ontario as a reason not to access PrEP. Programs to promote PrEP and to support costs of medications may improve PrEP uptake in Canada.