Awareness of PEP, PrEP and U=U in a high-risk urban population

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Spectra

A West London based charity that:

• Works to improve the choices, health and well-being of people often from diverse and marginalised communities. Empowering positive, informed choices about health, including sexual health, emotional resilience and wellbeing, and working with you to combat isolation and risk.

• Aims for knowledgeable, aware and empowered individuals and communities who have clear, accurate, credible and non-judgemental wellbeing and health information and quality services that are relevant and accessible.

• Provides outreach, HIV testing, STI sampling, counselling, 1-2-1 support and group work.

• Works with LGBTQ, BME communities and young people.

http://spectra-london.org.uk/
Background

• Public awareness of HIV-prevention strategies is key in the fight to end HIV

• PrEP and PEP awareness remain low in high-risk groups \(^1,2\)

• There are racial and ethnic disparities in awareness and knowledge of both PrEP and PEP \(^3\)

• There is high variability in the perceived accuracy of the U=U message \(^4\)
Aims

• To assess awareness of PEP, PrEP and U=U in a high-risk population in the UK

• To determine factors affecting awareness
Methods

• July 2017 - November 2018

• Retrospective observational study

• 2,570 clients were given a voluntary questionnaire as part of the registration process for HIV testing

• They were tested in community venues across London as part of Spectra’s services
Methods

• Sexual history data was collected

• Point of care HIV test administered

• Demographic data collected as part of registration process

• Awareness compared between groups using chi-squared tests
Results

• 948 completed the questionnaire
• 479 (51%) described themselves as Gay/Bisexual Men
• 305 (32%) identified as Black, Asian, or another minority ethnicity
Demographics (n=948)

Sexuality
- Straight: 41%
- Gay/Lesbian: 46%
- Pansexual: 0%
- MSM: 0%
- Bisexual: 9%
- Prefer not to say: 2%

Gender
- Male: 81%
- Female: 16%
- Intersex: 0%
- Non-binary: 0%
- Transgender: 1%
- Prefer not to say: 2%

Ethnicity
- White: 61%
- Asian: 11%
- Black: 11%
- Mixed: 5%
- Other: 5%
- Prefer not to say: 7%
Client Age

Number of participants

Age (years)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60
16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60 62 64 66 68 70
The questionnaire

- Please state if the following statements are true, false, or if you are unsure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having vaginal or anal sex without a condom makes HIV transmission more likely</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities like oral sex, touching, and kissing carry little to no risk for getting or transmitting HIV</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil-based lubricant is safe to use with latex condoms</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a medicine that can be taken immediately after exposure to HIV that reduces the chances of becoming infected</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a medication that if taken regularly can reduce the risk of getting HIV</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person with HIV would always tell you they have HIV before having unprotected sex</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV cannot be transmitted by a person who is on HIV medication who has an undetectable viral load</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using chems/recreational drugs has no effect on HIV transmission during unprotected anal or vaginal sex</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people who get HIV experience flu-like symptoms in the first few weeks</td>
<td>True</td>
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# The questionnaire

- Please state if the following statements are true, false, or if you are unsure

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Correct Answers (n=948)

- Condomless sex increases HIV Transmission: 91% correct, 6% incorrect, 3% unsure.
- PEP: 66% correct, 23% incorrect, 11% unsure.
- PrEP: 62% correct, 30% incorrect, 8% unsure.
- U=U: 39% correct, 37% incorrect, 24% unsure.
PEP Awareness over time

March 17, June 17, September 17, December 17, April 18, July 18, October 18, February 19
PEP Awareness over time

\( \chi^2 \; p=0.033 \)
PrEP Awareness over time
PrEP Awareness over time

χ² p=0.006
U=U awareness over time
U=U awareness over time


Nov 17 | Nov 18

χ² p = 0.014
Awareness of U=U, PrEP and PEP by Ethnicity

- White (n=578)
- Black (n=104)
- Asian (n=102)
- Mixed (n=45)
- Other (n=54)

Correct Answer (%)

- U=U
- PrEP
- PEP
Awareness of U=U, PrEP and PEP by Sexuality

*χ^2* p<0.0001
Sexual Risk Stratification

- Risk of sex in last 12 months?
  - All safe
  - Mostly safe
  - Mostly unsafe
  - All unsafe
  - N/A
Awareness of U=U, PrEP and PEP by Sexual Risk

χ² p=0.003

χ² p=0.011

χ² p=0.013
Key Points

1. Awareness of U=U was lower than of PrEP/PEP
2. Awareness has been steadily increasing over time
3. Awareness was lowest in Black and Asian ethnic groups
4. Gay and Bisexual Men were more aware than straight people
5. Those practicing safer sex were more aware than those practicing less safe sex
Conclusions

• Awareness of PEP, PrEP and U=U is increasing
• The majority remain unaware of U=U

• Increased awareness is associated with safer sex
• Increasing knowledge in BAME communities should be a priority

• An approach involving community organisations could achieve this
Acknowledgements

We’d like to thank the whole outreach team at Spectra who collected this data, the office staff who digitised the data, and Dee Wang who kindly provided the anonymised data on which analysis was performed.
References


