

nPEP Use Remains Low among Vancouver Gay, Bisexual and Men who Have Sex with Men

This study sought to evaluate awareness of nPEP among GBM living in Metro Vancouver, Canada, following the implementation of a publically-funded nPEP pilot program in 2012.

Why is this study important?

Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM) comprise about half of new HIV infections in Canada. Non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (nPEP) is a biomedical HIV prevention practice recommended for use among GBM following high-risk HIV exposure events, such as condomless anal sex and condom failures. But research suggests that awareness of this HIV prevention strategy remains low.

FACT BOX

Only 3% of HIV-negative Momentum Health Study participants who reported recent high-risk sex had used nPEP.

Non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (nPEP) involves the use of HIV antiretroviral medication following a single high-risk exposure to HIV, taken within 72 hours of the exposure, for 28 straight days.

What are the key study findings?

- 51.9% of GBM living with HIV and 48.5% HIV-negative GBM had heard of nPEP.
- 3% of HIV-negative GBM who reported recent high-risk sex had used nPEP.
- Among HIV-negative GBM, nPEP awareness was higher among participants who were students, Caucasian, had used alcohol recently, had more sex partners, attended group sex parties, had been previously diagnosed with an STI, and identified as gay as opposed to bisexual.
- Among HIV-positive GBM, nPEP awareness was higher among participants who were Caucasian, had greater access to condoms, only had condomless sex with partners of the same HIV status, and had greater perceived agency to ask sexual partners their HIV status.

What this means?

- This study found that nPEP awareness and use were high for a newly established program when compared with more established programs in other jurisdictions.
- But compared with other HIV prevention strategies (condoms, testing), nPEP awareness was low.



- Further research, program expansion and health promotion is needed to increase nPEP awareness so that GBM who have been exposed to HIV can access and start the nPEP regimen as soon as possible to reduce their likelihood of HIV infection.

How was this study conducted?

- Survey data from 2012 to 2014 were analyzed for Vancouver-based GBM who were enrolled in the Momentum study through respondent-driven sampling.
- Multivariable logistic regression identified socio-demographic, behavioural, and clinical factors associated with nPEP awareness.

What is the BC-CfE Momentum Health Study?

Evidence from British Columbia and elsewhere has demonstrated the expansion of access to antiretroviral HIV treatment (ART) can result in population-level reductions in HIV incidence. This is the concept behind the made-in-BC Treatment as Prevention[®] strategy, or TasP[®], which aims to expand early HIV testing and treatment to improve patients' health and curb the spread of HIV. Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) represent the most affected HIV risk group, both in BC and Canada. The BC-CfE Momentum Health Study is designed to measure changes in HIV risk behaviour, attitudes toward TasP[®] and the proportion of HIV-positive GBM with unsuppressed viral load over time in the Vancouver region. The study uses respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to obtain a more representative sample reflecting the diversity of the gbMSM community in Vancouver.

Citation: S.Y. Lin, N.J. Lachowsky, M. Hull, A. Rich, Z. Cui, P. Sereda, J. Jollimore, K. Stephenson, M. Thumath, J.S.G. Montaner, E.A. Roth, R.S. Hogg, and D.M. Moore. "Awareness and Use of Nonoccupational Post-exposure Prophylaxis among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Vancouver, Canada." *HIV Medicine HIV Med* (2016).

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27477994>



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