

PrEP users among Lisbon MSM Cohort participants – A first look after PrEP implementation in Portugal

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Background:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with tenofovir/emtricitabine has shown to be effective in preventing HIV among high-risk HIV-negative men who have sex with men (MSM). Portugal made PrEP available in February 2018, but few MSM reported PrEP use before. We aimed to compare the sociodemographic characteristics of MSM using PrEP and those knowing PrEP but not using and to compare MSM who started PrEP before and after its implementation in Portugal.

Methods:

We performed a cross-sectional analysis, using Lisbon MSM Cohort data - an open prospective cohort of HIV-negative MSM testing at a community-based center in Lisbon - regarding the first time PrEP use was reported. Data from March 2015 to April 2019 was used. In this period 2142 MSM participated in the cohort and reported to know PrEP of whom 160 (7.5%) reported to use it. 83 PrEP-users answered a subset of questions about PrEP. Comparisons were performed using t-test, Chi-square or Fisher's exact test.

Results:

Comparing with non-users, PrEP users were significantly older (Mean: 35.7, SD 9.4 vs. 30.8, SD 9.2, $p < 0.001$), had more frequently a Master or PhD degree (37.2% vs. 27.4%, $p = 0.017$), and were more frequently born in a foreign country (42.2% vs. 31.8%, $p < 0.001$). Groups were similar in terms sexual orientation. Among the 83 PrEP users answering more questions about PrEP, 28 (33.7%) reported to have ordered their PrEP medication online, 24 (28.9%) obtained it in a medical appointment in Portugal, 15 (18.1%) in a foreign country, 4 in a clinical trial or demonstration project. Of all PrEP users, 30 (19.4%) started PrEP only after February 2018, and no sociodemographic differences were found comparing with those who started before.

Conclusions:

MSM reporting PrEP use were more educated, older and more frequently born in a foreign country than non-PrEP users. MSM starting PrEP before and after February 2018 were similar, which may indicate that making PrEP available did not yet reach a more diverse group of MSM.

Key messages:

- MSM reporting PrEP use were more educated, older and more frequently born in a foreign country than non-PrEP users.
- MSM starting PrEP before and after February 2018 were similar, which may indicate that making PrEP available did not yet reach a more diverse group of MSM.