

# PrEP Awareness among Gay, Bisexual and Men who Have Sex with Men in Vancouver

What social, behavioural, and psychosocial factors are associated with PrEP awareness among GBM living in Metro Vancouver, Canada?

## Why is this study important?

- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM) account for about half of new HIV infections in Canada.
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an emerging biomedical HIV prevention tool for GBM and is approved for use in Canada, but does not currently receive public funding outside Quebec.
- This study aimed to evaluate awareness of PrEP among GBM living in Vancouver using data from 2012 to 2014.

## FACT BOX

- PrEP awareness is low among Vancouver gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men.
- Awareness is higher among GBM who engage in high-risk activities.

**Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)** involves the use of HIV antiretroviral medication prior to potential exposure (e.g., condomless anal sex), and following exposure, and is highly effective at preventing HIV infection.

## What are the key study findings?

- A higher proportion of HIV-positive GBM (26.5%) than HIV-negative GBM (20.9%) had previously heard of PrEP, but no study participants reported personal use of PrEP.
- Among HIV-negative GBM, greater awareness of PrEP was associated with older age, being Caucasian, being a student, attending group sex events, preferring to bottom during anal sex, reporting an HIV prevention strategy of only having condomless anal sex with HIV-positive partners on HAART, and higher levels of HAART optimism (a measure of confidence in the efficacy HAART).
- HIV-positive GBM were more likely to be aware of PrEP if they were Caucasian and did not use cocaine in the previous six months.

## What this means?

- The level of self-assessed knowledge regarding PrEP among Vancouver area GBM is low.
- Fortunately, risk factors for HIV transmission, such as attending group sex events, were positively associated with greater PrEP awareness.



## How was this study conducted?

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

## 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<sup>®</sup> strategy, or TasP<sup>®</sup>, 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<sup>®</sup> 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.

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