

EXPANDED PREP IMPLEMENTATION IN COMMUNITIES IN NSW, AUSTRALIA (EPIC-NSW): EVIDENCE-BASED IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

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Background: The New South Wales (NSW) HIV Strategy 2016-2020 aims to virtually eliminate HIV transmission by 2020. In the NSW context of high testing and treatment coverage, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is identified as a key tool. The NSW government, community, research organisations and clinicians have partnered in an innovative approach to rapidly scale-up PrEP. We describe the evidence-based design and roll-out of the NSW PrEP implementation study, EPIC-NSW.

Methods: 3700 people were calculated to meet the high-risk criteria for PrEP eligibility according to the NSW PrEP Guidelines. Based on estimates of HIV risk, daily PrEP use by these people was estimated to directly prevent 150 new HIV infections over one year. The NSW partnership designed the EPIC-NSW study which aims to measure the population-level impact of the rapid roll-out of PrEP to 3700 people on HIV diagnoses in NSW.

Results: EPIC-NSW features: 1) large-scale, rapid roll-out (March-December 2016) to ~25 clinics (including sexual health services, hospitals and general practices); 2) real-life implementation, consistent with clinical PrEP guidelines, and innovative models of care; 3) community resource development, education and mobilisation; 4) innovative data collection with minimal health service burden (automated extraction of clinical data from patient management systems and brief online self-administered adherence/behavioural questionnaires); 5) assessment of the program's impact on HIV and STI incidence in the cohort and the target population over three years. Enrolment is ongoing, with the enrolment rate exceeding projections.

Discussion: The design and results of this trial will provide definitive evidence for the additional role of PrEP in an integrated HIV response to ending HIV transmission. The success of EPIC-NSW relies on strong collaboration across the NSW HIV sector and community mobilisation to achieve rapid roll-out and creative use of available data sources and resources to enable efficient and effective implementation.

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