

# Gay Men's Understanding and Education of New HIV Prevention Technologies in Vancouver, Canada

There are still a number of barriers to be addressed in the uptake of HIV prevention methods and technologies.

## 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 (gbMSM) 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 gbMSM 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.

## FACT BOX

gbMSM are still overrepresented in the HIV epidemic. HIV treatment-based preventions such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and Treatment as Prevention<sup>®</sup> (TasP<sup>®</sup>) have been restricted in uptake due to factors such as poor education, limited acceptability and stigma among gbMSM.

## What are the key study findings?

- Rates of awareness regarding new prevention technologies (NPTs) among gbMSM vary widely across different geographic and health settings and between different interventions, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and TasP<sup>®</sup>.
- Misunderstandings about NPTs are also prevalent among gbMSM and gaps in comprehensive knowledge persist.
- NPT education comes from a number of different sources, such as: the internet, health care providers, community organizations and sexual partners and peers. Each of these sources have a number of strengths and weaknesses in relation to their reliability, value and usefulness.
- A variety of barriers associated with NPT uptake have not been addressed including inadequate risk perception, social barriers and HIV-related stigma, along with concerns about costs, side effects and effectiveness.



## What do these findings mean?

- It is important to address the barriers, misunderstandings and lack of knowledge surrounding NPTs in order to increase awareness and utilization of such preventions.
- Knowledge about how to increase awareness and uptake of NPTs is important for those working in the public health field, for policymakers and for individuals within gay communities.
- Multiple sources of information work together and complement each other to create a stronger and better understanding of NPTs. This creates the potential for numerous intervention opportunities, as combining sources can generate greater awareness and understanding.

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