

PrEP Implementation in an STD Clinic

TARGET POPULATION: Men who have Sex with Men presenting at a public STD clinic

LOCATION: Providence, RI

PROGRAM DESIGN: Provision of PrEP education materials and medications

ESTIMATED COST: N/A

FUNDING SOURCE: N/A

CORE ACTIVITIES

Background

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is efficacious in preventing HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM). In 2013, the Rhode Island Department of Health Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STDs and TB implemented a program to educate all MSM presenting to a public STD clinic about PrEP and provide the medication to those who are interested.

The PrEP Program at the Rhode Island STD Clinic is the only dedicated clinic providing PrEP services in the state.

The Rhode Island STD Clinic

The Rhode Island STD Clinic, part of The Miriam Hospital Immunology Center in Providence, is a publicly-funded STD clinic supported by the Rhode Island Department of Health. The clinic was established in early 2012 in response to increasing STD incidence in Rhode Island. The Miriam Hospital Immunology Center provides care to 80% of HIV-positive patients in the state, and the STD Clinic currently reports a >2% annual rate of new HIV diagnoses among MSM.

All MSM who present to the clinic for STD testing and treatment are offered education about PrEP, irrespective of reported behavioral risk factors. The

Rhode Island Department of Health adopted this approach to raise community awareness about PrEP and screening programs. This approach to bolstering PrEP access requires minimal dedicated funding to implement given that the majority of new HIV diagnoses in Rhode Island occur among MSM.

Test counselors are trained to counsel patients about PrEP and perform brief (approximately five minutes) PrEP educational sessions. Education includes clinical indications for PrEP, a description of emtricitabine/ tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF/FTC or Truvada), common side effects, and follow-up, followed by an opportunity to discuss any of the patient's questions or concerns regarding PrEP. The educational session is based on [CDC guidelines](#). Patients who are interested in PrEP are scheduled for an appointment in the following one to two weeks with a medical provider.

DATA

As of July 2016, more than 200 individuals had been prescribed PrEP via the Rhode Island STD Clinic. The majority were White (70%) with an average age of 34 years. Twenty-three percent identified as Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-two percent (92%) of all individuals receiving care were MSM and 29% were individuals in serodiscordant relationships; 22% reported anal sex with an HIV-positive male partner. A total of 85% reported substance use in the past three months and 80% reported alcohol use.

EVALUATION

The health department and clinic staff evaluated reasons why MSM who presented to the Rhode Island STD Clinic did not want PrEP. Of the initial 234 patients educated about PrEP, 56% expressed interest. Common reasons for lack of interest were low HIV risk perception (37%), wanting more time to consider (10%), concern about side effects (7%), and financial barriers (3%).

Among those interested, 53% followed up. Of those, 51% scheduled an appointment. The most common reason patients did not schedule an appointment was low HIV risk perception (38%).

Seventy-seven percent of those with an appointment attended the appointment; of those, 93% initiated PrEP. Patients with higher HIV risk perception and a history of sex with an HIV-positive partner had significantly higher odds of initiating PrEP.

OUTCOMES

PrEP education was successfully integrated in a busy STD clinic setting, increasing awareness and access for patients. All staff are trained by the clinical team on providing culturally-competent PrEP education and counselling to MSM.

STD Clinics are a potential option to provide education and access to PrEP.

STRENGTHS

- The PrEP Program at the Rhode Island STD Clinic is the only dedicated clinic providing PrEP services in the state
- PrEP educational services are fully integrated into existing HIV/STD educational and

LIMITATIONS

- Barriers to PrEP include low self-perceived risk of HIV
- There are several reasons that patients may not be interested in or able to access PrEP; once identified, they will allow the Rhode Island Department of Health to better address those needs in working to accelerate ending the HIV epidemic

FUNDING & COST

Funding for the Rhode Island STD Clinic is provided through a collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Health and The Miriam Hospital. PrEP is covered by all major public and private insurers in Rhode Island. For patients without insurance, the Gilead assistance program provides free medication. Gilead also has a cost-sharing assistance program to cover co-payments/cost-sharing payments/deductibles.

STAKEHOLDERS

Rhode Island Department of Health, The Miriam Hospital, Gilead's patient assistance and cost-sharing assistance programs, and private insurance carriers.

PROGRAM CONTACT

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References

Chan PA, Glynn TR, Oldenburg CE, Montgomery MC, Robinette AE, Almonte A, Raifman J, Mena L, Patel R, Mayer KH, Beauchamps LS, Nunn AS. "Implementation of pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men at a New England sexually transmitted diseases clinic." *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. 2016.