HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Practices and Beliefs in Four African Countries



Neha Shah¹, Nicole Dear^{1,2}, Sean Cavannaugh¹, Michael Iroezindu^{1,3}, Emmanuel Bahemana^{1,4}, Hannah Kibuuka⁵, John Owuoth^{6,7}, Jonah Maswai^{1,8}, Valentine Singoei^{6,7}, Ajay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Alay Parikh^{1,2}, Susannah Colt^{1,2}, Trevor A. Crowell^{1,2}, Christina S. Polyak^{1,2}, Julie A. Ake¹ on behalf of the AFRICOS Study Group

¹U.S. Military HIV Research Program, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Silver Spring, MD, ²Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Bethesda, MD, ³HJF Medical Research International, Abuja, Nigeria, ⁴HJF Medical Research International, Mbeya, Tanzania, ⁵Makerere University Walter Reed Project, Kampala, Uganda, ⁶U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate – Africa, Kisumu, Kenya, ⁷HJF Medical Research International, Kisumu, Kenya, ⁸HJF Medical Research International, Kericho, Kenya

BACKGROUND

- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an essential component to stopping the HIV epidemic.
- Recent breakthroughs in PrEP including the vaginal ring and longacting preparations provide more options for individuals.
- PrEP uptake continues to be a challenge but is a focal PEPFAR strategy.
- Our goal was to understand current PrEP uptakes and barriers to scaling up.

METHODS

- Individuals aged 16 years or older without HIV were referred to the African Cohort Study (AFRICOS) from 12 PEPFAR-supported clinics in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria through their sexual partners, social media outlets or outreach to communities and schools.
- Starting in 2020, participants were administered a survey regarding PrEP knowledge, practices, and beliefs every six months.
- We conducted descriptive analyses from a participant's first study visit after PrEP-related questions had been introduced.
- Individuals who completed a survey between February 2020 through March 2022 were included in the analysis.

RESULTS

All PLWoH who responded

Age at visit (years)

Sex

Male

Female

Marital status

Single

Married

Divorced/Separated

Widowed

Consume alcohol (yes)

Use recreational drugs (yes

PrEP Questions pertaining

Ever heard of PrEP

Discussed PrEP with a heal

Taken PrEP before sex (skip

Willing to take PrEP daily

Might feel shame/embarra

Sexual Partners in the last

Report having a regular par

Report having a casual par

	# responded	N (% media	
d to PrEP questions			
	401	37.6 (27	
	401		
		183	
		218	
	399		
		112	
		244	
		24	
		18	
	401	70 (
es)	401	6 (

g to last 6 months			
	401	154 (
althcare provider (skip pattern)	154	48 (3	
ip pattern)	154	14 (
	398	180 (
assment about taking PrEP	386	80 (2	

t 6 months		
artner	356	293 (
rtner	353	17 (







CONCLUSIONS

- Few participants had heard of or were taking PrEP.
- While our cohort may not represent a high-risk population, PrEP awareness was limited among those who were either unaware of their partner's status or who had a partner infected with HIV.
- The lack of PrEP awareness highlights the need for increased provider education and outreach especially as new, and potentially less stigmatizing, PrEP options come to market.

We thank the study participants, local implementing partners, and hospital leadership at Kayunga District Hospital, Kericho District Hospital, AC Litein Mission Hospital, Kapkatet District Hospital, Tenwek Mission Hospital, Kapsabet District Hospital, Nandi Hills District Hospital, Kisumu West District Hospital, Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital, Mbeya Regional Referral Hospital, Defence Headquarters Medical Center, and the 68th Nigerian Army Reference Hospital. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be construed to represent the positions of the US Army or the Department of Defense. This work was supported by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief via a cooperative agreement between the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., and the U.S. Department of Defense [W81XWH-11-2-0174, W81XWH-18-2-0040]. The investigators have adhered to the policies for protection of human subjects as prescribed in AR 70–25.





