Differences in prevalence of PrEP use and non-use by sexual agreement type and couple serostatus among gay male couples

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Background
PrEP use is increasing among gay men. However, relationship status is not often considered while examining rates of uptake. Early findings on attitudes towards PrEP among men in relationships were mixed – along with approval of the potential benefits, concerns emerged about how reduced fears of HIV infection might impact sexual agreements, the disclosure (or non-disclosure) to primary partners of potentially risky sexual episodes with outside partners, and the ensuing influence on relationship trust and communication.

Methods
- Between July 2017 and March 2020 we recruited 308 concordant HIV-negative and serodiscordant male couples (616 men) for an HIV prevention intervention trial in the San Francisco Bay Area using active and passive strategies.
- To be eligible, each partner had to: be 18 years or older, be fluent in English, know their own as well as their primary partner’s HIV status, have had anal sex in the past three months, and not be transgender. The couple had to have been in the relationship for at least 3 months.
- Both partners completed a self-administered baseline survey.
- We present select frequencies related to PrEP use among the HIV-negative participants (N=551) in the baseline assessment by couple serostatus and agreement type.

Results

Table 1: Prevalence of PrEP Use among HIV-negative men (N=551) in Concordant Negative and Serodiscordant relationships by Sexual Agreement Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple HIV Status</th>
<th>PrEP use status in the prior 3 months</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
<th>Monogamous agreement N (%)</th>
<th>Non-monogamous agreement N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concordant HIV-negative</td>
<td>Did not use PrEP</td>
<td>241 (50%)</td>
<td>90 (37%)</td>
<td>151 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=486)</td>
<td>Used PrEP</td>
<td>245 (50%)</td>
<td>20 (8%)</td>
<td>225 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serodiscordant HIV</td>
<td>Did not use PrEP</td>
<td>25 (38%)</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=65)</td>
<td>Used PrEP</td>
<td>40 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>35 (88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Only 50% of HIV-negative men in concordant and 62% in serodiscordant relationships used PrEP, demonstrating a continuing need to increase uptake.
- The prevalence of PrEP use varies vastly by agreement type with over 90% of those using PrEP reporting non-monogamous agreements.
- Across both couple serostatus groups, among those who did not use PrEP, roughly two-thirds reported non-monogamous agreements. This may indicate the declining role of sexual agreements as “safety agreements”.
- Future research with this sample will be able to further delineate the context for PrEP, (e.g., presence of “U=U” approach, possible shifting motivations for sexual agreements). This relationship- and partner-focused approach has been underutilized.
- These findings speak to the need for partners to incorporate PrEP use explicitly into discussions of sexual agreements in order to better address male couples’ unique prevention and relationship needs in the ever-evolving HIV prevention landscape.

Conclusions

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Acknowledgements

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