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Acceptability of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

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Abstract

Introduction:

Clinical trials have demonstrated the safety and efficacy of PrEP for MSM, which is not yet approved within the UK. Demonstration of biomedical prophylaxes within clinical trials provides evidence only of the potential efficacy of such treatments. In the real world, the value of PrEP for health promotion amongst MSM depends not only on issues of efficacy but also its acceptability, uptake and sustainability.

Method:

Cross sectional, self-administered survey of 1928 MSM recruited online via various sources of web and smartphone social media in October 2012 – March 2013.

Results:

One third of participants were aware of PrEP (28% in Republic of Ireland to 35% in Northern Ireland) and a similar proportion was 'likely' to use it should it become available (27.8% in Wales to 32.7% in Republic of Ireland). Increased likelihood of PrEP use was associated with aged ≤ 24 ($p<0.005$), reporting UAI with casual or status unknown partners ($p<0.001$), annual HIV testing ($p<0.05$) and frequent social media use ($p<0.05$). Most men felt PrEP would not make condoms (40%) or safer sex (33%) less important but were concerned that it would mean others take more sexual risks (59%). We discuss how PrEP acceptability varied with sociodemographics and country of residence characteristics.

Conclusion:

PrEP is largely acceptable to MSM in the UK and may be most attractive to those men at risk. However, as PrEP offers only partial protection, other risk reduction elements must be incorporated within PrEP interventions.

Biography:

Dr. Jamie Frankis is a senior lecturer in research methods within the School of Health and Life Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University. He is the principle investigator in the Social Media, Men who have Sex with Men and Sexual Health (SMMaSH) study 2013 a mixed methods investigation of digital media and sexual health in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. He has worked within sexual health psychological research for over 15 years.