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Martin
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Lessons learned delivering PrEP services to men in South Africa



Men – a gap in the HIV response?

Much work has been done to implement social and health programmes to address HIV in women, but there are gaps in access and use of services among men

In South Africa

- There are an estimated 2.46 million men living with HIV
- Men account for 37% of all adults living with HIV
- Prevalence of HIV among men peaks later than women and is highest in those aged 45 – 49 years at 24.8%
- Men account for 39.2% of all new adult HIV infections
- Almost 23% of boys aged 15 years will acquire HIV before they reach 60 years

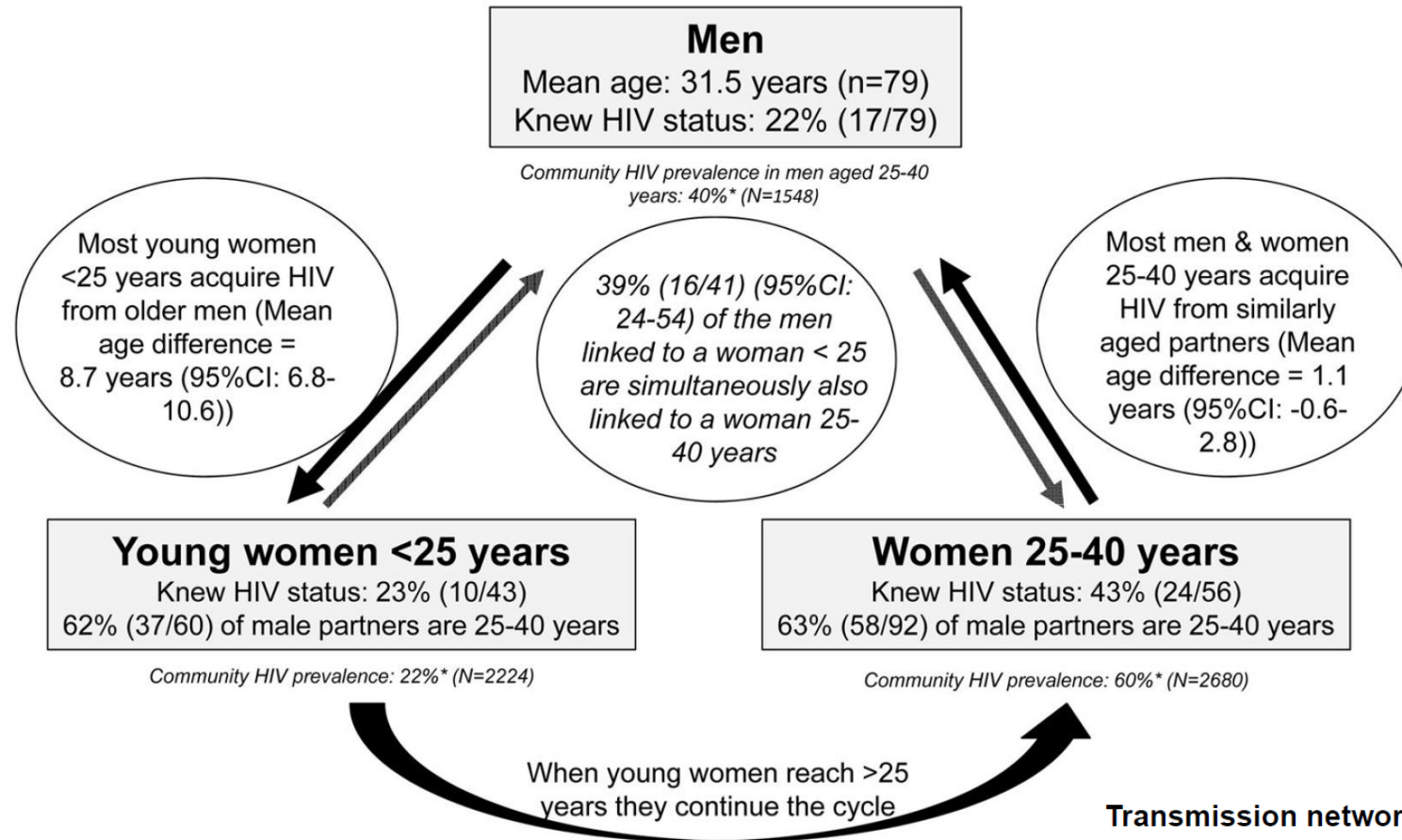
Men are less likely to:

- Access health services than women
- Test for HIV and know their status
- Start anti-retroviral treatment (ART)

Men are more likely to die of AIDS-related causes and TB

- UNAIDS. A snapshot of men and HIV in South Africa. 2017
- Simbayi LC, et al (2019) South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey, 2017. Cape Town: HSRC Press
- National Department of Health South Africa. The South African National Integrated Men's Health Strategy 2020 – 2025. December 2020.

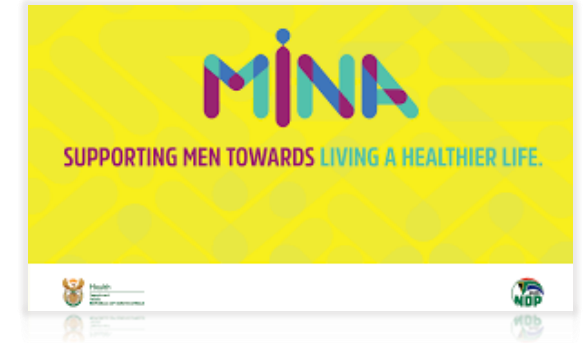
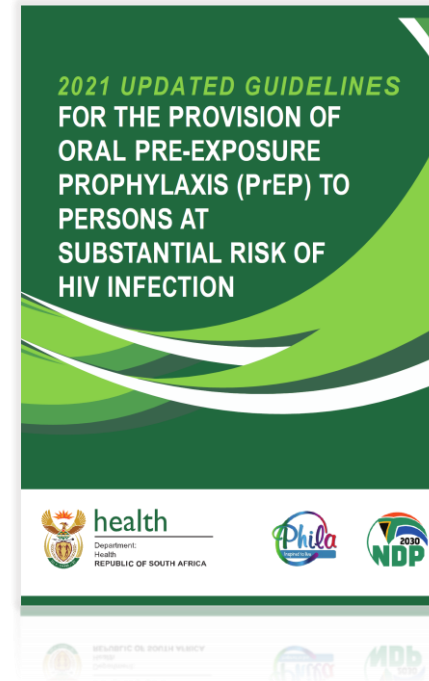
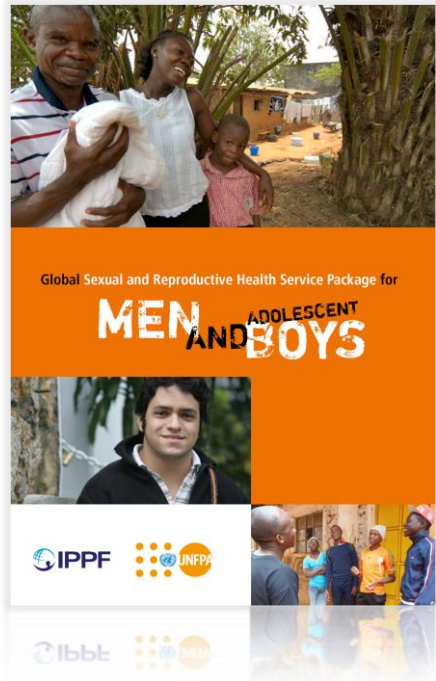
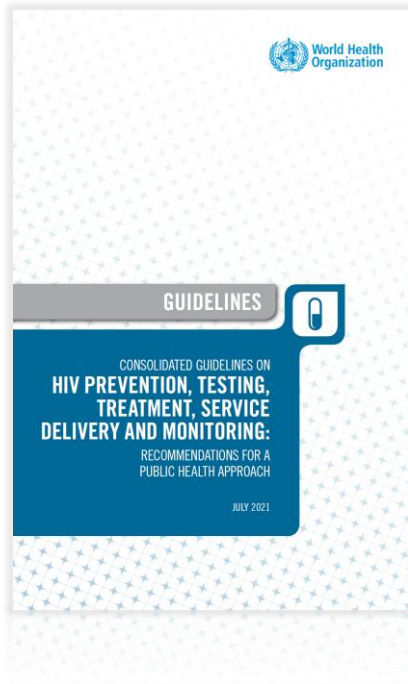
Men are an important link in the HIV transmission dynamics in South Africa



Transmission networks and risk of HIV infection in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: a community-wide phylogenetic study

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PrEP is recommended as an HIV prevention option for men in global and local guidelines and strategies



The Unitaid funded Project PrEP is an implementation study aimed at generating real-world evidence to inform the introduction and integration of oral PrEP as part of combination HIV prevention and SRH services in South Africa.

Project PrEP is implemented in 8 fixed and 4 mobile clinics in 4 high priority geographical areas across South Africa

Strong demand creation interventions through innovative online and community platforms

The fixed facility provides an anchor for services, with a roving mobile unit reaching surrounding communities

Teams of nurses, counsellors, peer educators provide integrated SRH services in line with national guidelines (including HTS, PrEP, STI management, Family Planning services)

The project implements and evaluates SRH service delivery model adaptations and innovations for improved access and reach, including through a number of sub-studies

| | |
|--|--|
| December 2018 to October 2022 Project PrEP has provided services to 36 685 clients | 5 398 (14.7%) women >24 years |
| | 26 167 (71.3%) adolescent girls & young women |
| | 2 592 (7%) adolescent boys & young men |
| | 2 508 (6.8%) men >24 years |



What have we
learnt about
implementing
PrEP for men in
South Africa?



1 Partners of AGYW receiving PrEP are also at risk

Baseline characteristics of a cohort of AGYW initiated on oral PrEP at Project PrEP sites (January 2019 to October 2022)

| | N = 2238 (100%) |
|--|-----------------|
| Sexual intercourse [#] | 1893 (84.5%) |
| Anal intercourse [#] (of those having sex) | 87 (4.6%) |
| Consistent condom use during vaginal sex (of those having sex) | 333 (17.6%) |
| Consistent condom use during anal sex (of those having anal sex) | 41 (47.1%) |
| Used a condom at last sex with main partner* | 663 (30.5%) |
| Transactional sex [#] | 128 (5.7%) |

| | N = 2238 (100%) |
|--|-----------------|
| Sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs [#] | 477 (21.3%) |
| Partner treated for an STI ^{**} | 104 (10.9%) |
| Experienced Intimate Partner Violence [#] | 198 (8.8%) |
| More than one partner | 254 (11.3%) |
| Partner >5 years older | 403 (18.0%) |
| HIV status of partner unknown | 1332 (59.5%) |

[#] In the last 3 months

* in those who report having a partner (n= 951)

2 Social media provides health information to men

Examples of the messaging directed to men on Facebook @myPrEPSouthAfrica



Common questions asked by men on social media

My question is I wish to use prep to avoid me from contracting some disease through sex I have no problem using condoms they aren't always reliable 2:57 pm

You
Hello! 😊 How can I assist you?
Hi where you based I need some PrEP 8:17 pm

How much are prep pills 8:56 am

Good day I would like to know I have a girlfriend who is hiv positive now she wants a baby can I take prep for that one night while we have sex is it safe 2:14 pm

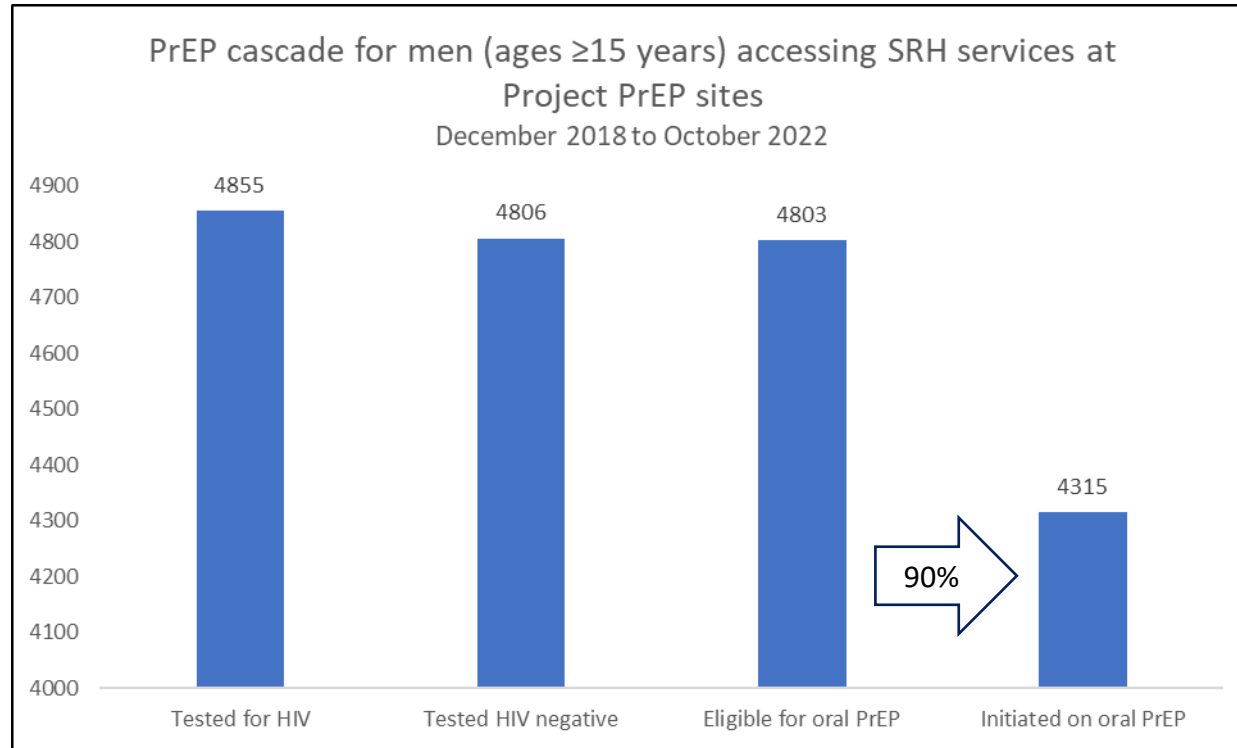
What is the difference between the PEP and PrEP 11:28 am

PEP and PrEP are different from each other. PEP is taken AFTER exposure to HIV and must be taken within 72hours of exposure to HIV.

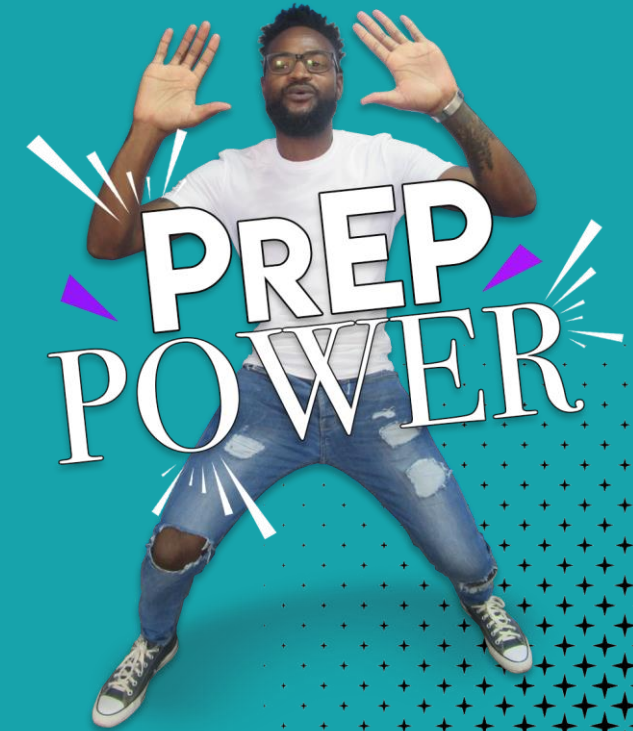
PrEP offers more than 90% protection from HIV and must be taken

3

A high proportion of men testing for HIV were eligible and initiated on PrEP



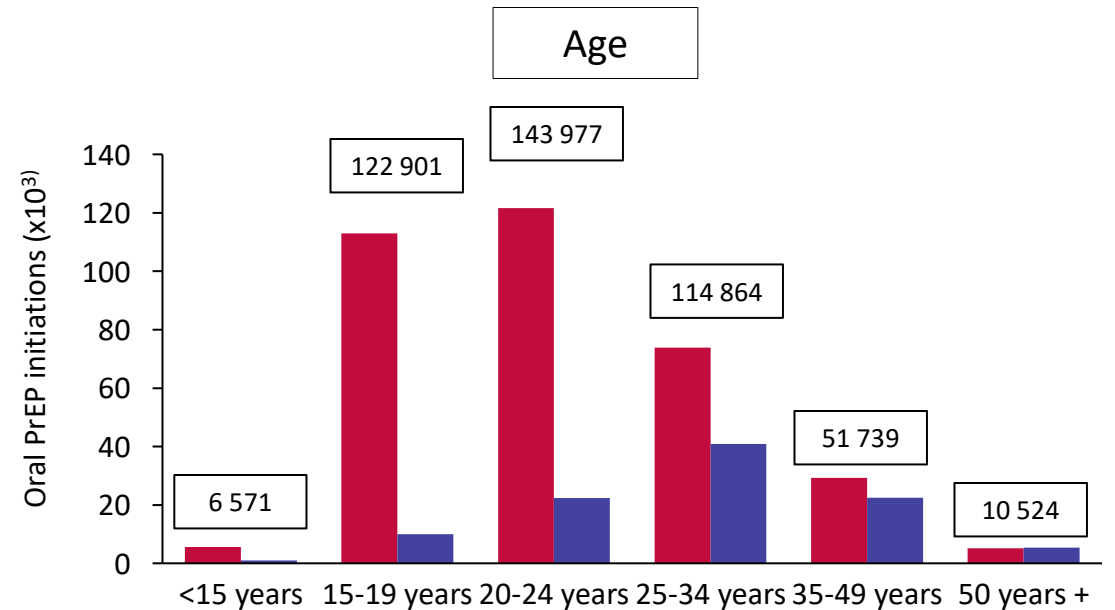
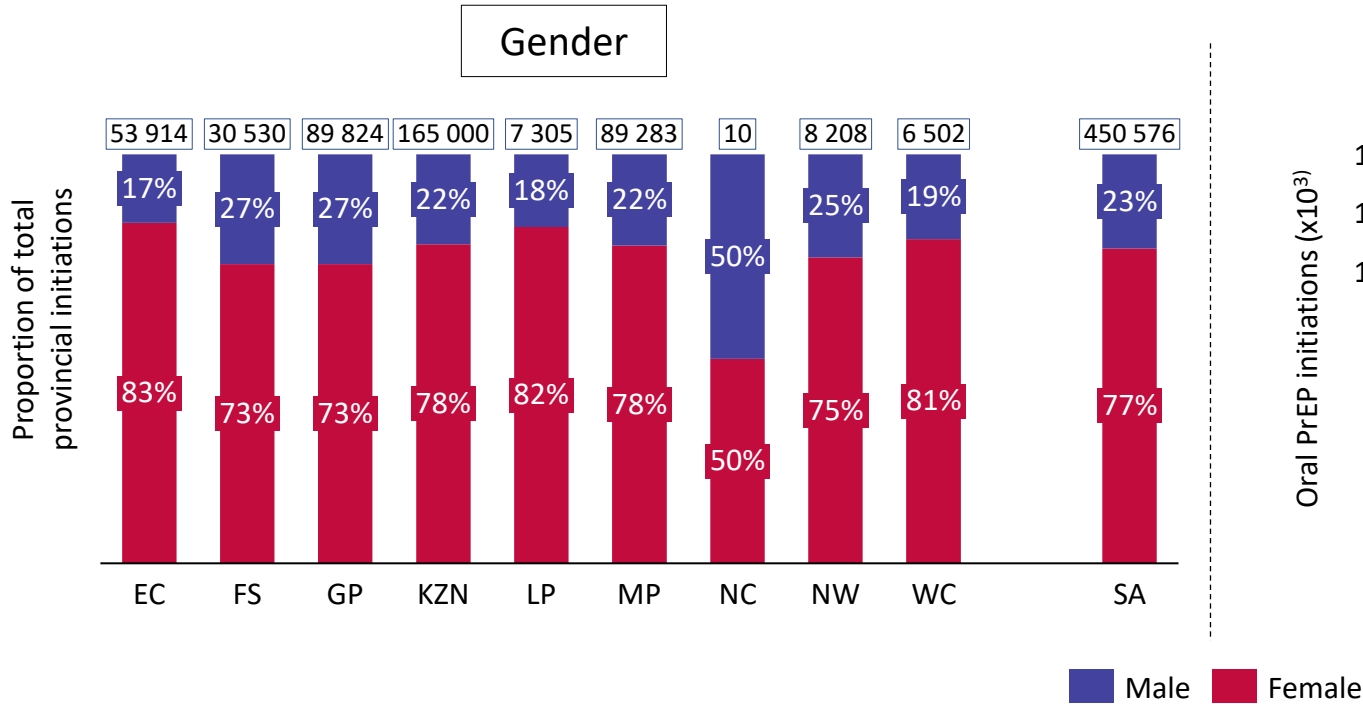
Source: Project PrEP monitoring and evaluation data



4

Men in South Africa are initiating PrEP

Provincial oral PrEP initiations by gender and age
 (based on 450 576 initiations between April 2020 – June 2022, for which demographic details are available)



Source: consolidated from TIER and Partner reports (April 2020 – June 2022).

Slide courtesy of Hasina Subedar, National Department of Health

5 Men accessing PrEP are at risk for HIV and STIs

Baseline characteristics of a nested cohort of males initiated on oral PrEP August 2020 to October 2022 (N=519)

| | N = 519 (100%) |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Age | |
| 15 - 17 years | 59 (11.3%) |
| 18 - 20 years | 120 (23.1%) |
| 21 - 24 years | 152 (29.2%) |
| 25 years and older | 188 (36.2%) |
| Heterosexual | 491 (94.6%) |
| Employed or in education | 434 (83.6%) |
| Circumcised | 168 (62.2%) |
| Partner's HIV status | |
| HIV positive | 34 (6.5%) |
| HIV negative | 204 (39.3%) |
| Unknown | 281 (55.6%) |

| | N = 519 (100%) |
|--|----------------|
| Any anal intercourse* | 48 (10.2%) |
| Consistent condom use (vaginal sex) | 75 (14.4%) |
| Consistent condom use (anal sex) | 23 (4.4%) |
| More than one partner | 204 (39.3%) |
| Used drugs* | 68 (13.1%) |
| Binge drank* | 318 (61.2%) |
| Sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs* | 190 (36.6%) |
| Any STI symptoms | 28 (5.3%) |
| Sexual debut <15 years | 92 (17.7%) |

* In the last 3 months

Where are men accessing PrEP?

PrEP initiation by initiation site among male oral PrEP users (N=4315) (December 2018 to October 2022)

| PrEP initiation site | N = 4315 (100%) |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Fixed facility | 3367 (78%) |
| Mobile facility | 948 (22%) |

Service access points:

- HIV testing services
- STI treatment services
- Heard about PrEP from partners, friends, at school, and on the TV

*Yah. The thing that made me to start PrEP is because last year **I was diagnosed with an STI**. Before I was given treatment, they wanted to test me. And after they tested me, they told me about PrEP, Yes, so that's when I became interested.*
(28-year-old male)

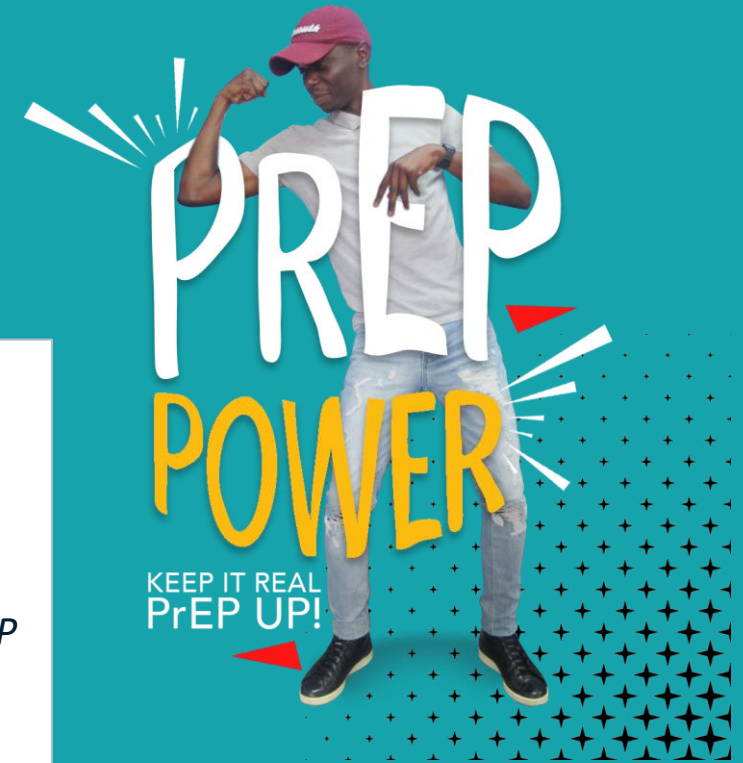
*I have heard talks that there is PEP, so I wanted to know...to hear the difference. Now that is the reason **I went to the clinic now to go and hear what is the difference between PrEP and PEP**. It was very helpful! I even saw that I can start the road to PrEP.*
(34-year-old male)

Men report using PrEP because they have risk factors for HIV

- Having multiple sexual partners
- Inconsistent condom use
- Mistrust of partners
- Having a sexual partner who is living with HIV

*So, what motivated me the most is that I once found myself in a situation, in fact in a **relationship with a person who has it [HIV]**. Then we made the mistake of not testing before. Yes, that's what motivated me. Because at other times it happens that you meet another person. Sometimes you say no even, even because other people don't, don't like checking regularly, you see? Yeah so, they think that I am going to use a condom. But sometimes find that it happens that you don't use a condom, you see? So that's where I say, that's where PrEP comes in you see? That if ever I didn't use a condom, but I know that I'm taking PrEP.*

32-year-old male



- Qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 28 male PrEP users collected between February 2020 and May 2022 as part of Unitaid funded Project PrEP
- Paper on male PrEP use under review: Cox et. al. The use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among men accessing routine sexual and reproductive health services in South Africa

Reasons for discontinuing PrEP include health systems factors as well as HIV risk

- Reasons relating to **sexual behaviour** included no longer being sexually active and having only one faithful partner
- Men also reported **stigma, pill fatigue and side effects** as reasons for discontinuing PrEP
- More predominant reasons cited were **challenges with access**, such as the clinic being too far, not having time, having relocated or being unable to attend clinic visits due to work and school commitments

I have stopped....It is because of my job because that time. It was December. I didn't have a chance to be off I was always working. In December last year. So, that's why I didn't find time to come here [clinic] because of that, yeah. (21-year-old Male Participant, 7 months on PrEP)

I haven't been using PrEP for a long time. It has been a while. The reason why I wasn't using it? Because I was in the village. There was something I had to do that side, but they do not have this thing [PrEP]. So, when I came back, I even called the clinic here and said I will come and get PrEP again, but I ended up not coming because most of the time if I'm not at school I'm this side because I'm not even working, so I have to make means to survive. (21-year-old Male Participant, 10 months on PrEP)

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- Paper on male PrEP use under review: Cox et. al. The use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among men accessing routine sexual and reproductive health services in South Africa

Conclusions

- There is a substantial burden of HIV among men in South Africa
- Whilst much work has been done to implement social and health programmes to address HIV in women, there are gaps in access and use of services among men
- Understanding barriers to access is important in ensuring strategies meet the needs of men
- Men at risk are interested in HIV prevention and willing to initiate PrEP when offered
- SRH and PrEP service provision to AGYW provides an opportunity to support service access to their partners
- High rates of unknown partner HIV status highlights an opportunity to improve partner testing, which could include the use of self-testing
- Strengthening access and including oral PrEP as an HIV prevention option should be considered as part of integrated HIV prevention services for men
- Planning for the introduction of new PrEP methods needs to consider access for men



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Thank You