

# Sexual habits and STDs occurrence in people attending a new PrEP clinic in Brescia

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## Background

- Despite established HIV prevention strategies, Brescia, remain one of the top five Italian cities with the higher incidence of new HIV infection. The offer of an alternative strategy for HIV prevention, among men who have sex with men (MSM), is crucial.
- The aim of this study is to analyze the profile of people attending the new PrEP outpatients service.

## Material and methods

- This is a cross-sectional study with the aim to take a snapshot of the population belonging to the first 6 months opening of PrEP clinic of the Spedali Civili of Brescia from 29 Sep 23.
- We collected data about sexual habits and risk perception by an anonymous survey, moreover we recorded prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as intake pattern, adherence, adverse events, and discontinuation of PrEP with a quarterly routine clinical evaluation.

## Results

- Out of 76 subjects evaluated in the PrEP clinic, this study includes data of 42 male subjects (17 PrEP-experienced coming from other centers and 25 PrEP-naïve), 93% (n=39) homosexuals and 7% (n=3) bisexuals, with a median age of 32±7 yo.
- About sexual habits, 24% (n=10) report their first sexual intercourse before the age of 16, 64% (n=27) between the ages of 17-25 and 12% (n=5) over the age of 26.
- Most of the population (76%, n=32) is single while 24% is in an open relationship with a median of 2 sexual partners per week for both groups; 64% of the population (n=27) use dating apps (83% to plan a date easily and 17% for shyness) aimed in 81% of cases for sexual purposes.
- 32% (n=8) of naïve people start PrEP because of routinely condomless intercourses, while 68% (n=17) report that they use condom and want to start PrEP to have sex more peacefully; 56% (n=14) of PrEP-naïve people use condoms, 88% (n=15) of PrEP-experienced people have routinely condomless sex and only 12% (n=2) of them continue to use it.
- About PrEP intake, 70% (n=29) take it daily and 30% (n=13) take it on demand. 80% (n=34) had no side effects, while 20% (n=8) had mild gastrointestinal disorders resolved within a week and only 1-person discontinued PrEP due to an allergic reaction. 92% (n=39) reported full adherence to PrEP, while 8% (n=3) timetable inaccuracies.
- Overall, 16 cases of STDs have been diagnosed in 12 subjects, 7 during screening at first visit and 5 at follow-up: 2 cases of isolated of latent syphilis, and remaining cases of gonorrhoea (n=4), chlamydia (n=5) and mycoplasma (n=5), managed by our STDs clinic successfully.

POPULATION	
Total	76 subjects (100% male subjects)
Evaluated	42 male ( 17 PrEP experienced, 25 PrEP naïve)
	93% (n 39) homosexual
	7% (n 3) bisexual
Age	32±7 yo
SEXUAL HABITS	
Medium age of first sexual intercourse	
≤16 yo	24% (n 10)
17-19 yo	33% (n 14)
20-25 yo	31% (n13)
≥ 26 yo	12% (n 5)
Medium partners per week	
≤1	69% (n 29)
2-5	26% (n 11)
>5	4 % (n 2)
Use of condom	
Condomless	55% (n 23)
Sometimes	7% (n 3)
Always	38% (n 16)
SOCIAL HABITS	
Relationship	
Single	76% (n 32)
Open relationship	24% (n 10)
PrEP	
Intake use	
Daily	70% (n 29)
On demand	30% (n 13)
Adverse events	
No side effects	80% (n 34)
GI disorders	18% (n 7)
Allergy	2% (n 1)
STDs	
Diagnosis of STIs (12 subjects)	
Screening	17% (n 7)
Follow-up	12% (n 5)
Type of IST	
Syphilis	4% (n 2)
Gonorrhoeae	10% (n 4)
Chlamydia	12% (n 5)
Mycoplasma	12% (n 5)

## Conclusions

Our study shows a preliminary picture of PrEP population highlighting the importance of a safe HIV protection strategy among people with high-risk sexual habits. The benefits of PrEP program are not only to reduce HIV infection incidence, but also to screen and early treat STDs to reduce the incidence and prevalence as well in a population with high risk of STDs occurrence.