

Would you use PrEP? Trends among MSM between 2013 and 2015

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Objective To assess current knowledge and intended future use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Italy, to evaluate changes happened in the past two years and to investigate how PrEP use could affect the sexual behaviour of MSM.

Methods Self-administered web-based survey of 465 MSM (more data could be added) on March 2015 whose results were compared with a similar survey conducted in March 2013.

Results Most of responders were sexually active (almost 9 in 10 reported having had anal sex in the last six months, same as 2013); one out of four (24.5%) never heard about PrEP, compared to more than half (53.48%) in 2013. The proportion of respondents who would use PrEP decreased from 64.4% in 2013 to 55.9% in 2015; PrEP is even more interesting for those who did not hear about it (61.9% vs 53.9%) and for those who did not use a condom last time they had sex (67.3% vs 47.9%).

The participants who reported they would not use PrEP or do not know whether they would use it (respectively 27.7% and 16.3% in 2015 vs 17.7% and 17.9% in 2013) were asked about their reasons: those concerned about its reliability decreased in the past two years (8.8% in 2015 vs 29.0% in 2013 do not think it is reliable at all and 18.5% in 2015 vs 26.3% in 2013 do not know how reliable it is), with people already informed about PrEP more likely to think it is not reliable at all. Almost one out of two among those who would not take PrEP thinks it should be available for other people (45.4% in 2015 vs 45.2% in 2013); others (27.8% in 2015 vs 33.5% in 2013) think it should not be available because it would lead to lower condom use.

Among those who would use PrEP, more than one half (50.8% in 2015 vs 53.7% in 2013) would prefer an intermittent strategy; most of them (75.4% in 2015 vs 49.3% in 2013) said they knew about PrEP. Responders willing to take PrEP were then asked about changes in their sex life: more than 6 in 10 (64.2% in 2015 vs 59.6% in 2013) would have sex with the same frequency they have now. In terms of condoms use, less than 3 in 10 (29.0%, same as 2013) would change their behaviour (they would not use condoms in some occasions even if they now report to always use condoms) while the others would continue to “always”, “almost always” or “never or almost never” use condom (27.0%, 20.5%, 17.8% in 2015 vs 37.4%, 17.9% and 11.4% in 2013 respectively). The partner's HIV status is not such a strong driver for change in sexual behaviour as knowing well the partner is (36.5 in 2015 vs 39.5% in 2013 of responders would change their behaviour according to the fact they have sex with their steady partner, a person with whom they have sex regularly or an occasional partner).

Conclusions Information about PrEP is increasing but it seems fuelling fears more than confidence. Nevertheless, those who would most benefit from PrEP use seem willing to take it. Risk-compensation does not seem a high concern.

SURVEY RESULTS 2015

Did you have anal sex in the last six months?	
Yes	89,26% (N= 424)
No	10,53% (N= 50)
Don't want to answer	0,21% (N= 1)
Total	100,00% (N= 475)

Did you use a condom last time you had anal sex in the past six months?	
yes	57,31% (N= 243)
No	41,75% (N= 177)
Don't know/Don't remember/Don't want to answer	0,94% (N= 4)
Total	100,00% (N= 424)

Had you already heard about PrEP?	
Yes	75,37% (N= 358)
No	24,00% (N= 114)
Don't want to answer	0,63% (N= 3)
Total	100,00% (N= 475)

Should a clinician offer to you this opportunity, would you use it?	Had you already heard about PrEP?			Total
	yes	no	don't know	
Yes, but only under medical control	43,30% (N= 155)	52,63% (N= 60)	33,33% (N= 1)	45,47% (N= 216)
Yes, also without medical control	10,89% (N= 39)	8,77% (N= 10)	0,00% (N= 0)	10,32% (N= 49)
No	31,28% (N= 112)	17,54% (N= 20)	66,67% (N= 2)	28,21% (N= 134)
Don't know	14,53% (N= 52)	21,05% (N= 24)	0,00% (N= 0)	16,00% (N= 76)
Total	100,00% (N= 358)	100,00% (N= 114)	100,00% (N= 3)	100,00% (N= 475)

Why did you answer "No" or "Don't know"?	Had you already heard about PrEP?			Total
	yes	no	don't know	
I'm HIV positive	10,37% (N= 18)	13,64% (N= 6)	0,00% (N= 0)	11,43% (N= 24)
Don't know how reliable is this method	10,98% (N= 10)	18,18% (N= 8)	0,00% (N= 0)	8,57% (N= 18)
Don't think this method is reliable at all	19,51% (N= 33)	13,64% (N= 6)	0,00% (N= 0)	18,57% (N= 39)
Don't want to take drugs	5,49% (N= 39)	13,64% (N= 6)	0,00% (N= 0)	21,43% (N= 45)
Afraid of adverse events	7,93% (N= 51)	25,00% (N= 11)	100,00% (N= 2)	30,48% (N= 64)
Other/Don't want to or don't know what to answer	0,61% (N= 13)	15,91% (N= 7)	0,00% (N= 0)	9,52% (N= 20)
Total	54,88% (N= 164)	100,00% (N= 44)	100,00% (N= 2)	100,00% (N= 210)

Again, if you answered "No" or "Don't know", do you think this opportunity should be offered to other people, even if you would not take it?	Had you already heard about PrEP?			Total
	yes	no	don't know	
No, it's a waste of money	18,75% (N= 18)	3,57% (N= 1)	0,00% (N= 0)	15,20% (N= 19)
No, don't think it's efficacious	0,00% (N= 0)	3,57% (N= 1)	0,00% (N= 0)	0,80% (N= 1)
No, drugs cause more harm than good	12,50% (N= 12)	10,71% (N= 3)	0,00% (N= 0)	12,00% (N= 15)
No, it will make people stop using condoms	51,04% (N= 49)	32,14% (N= 9)	100,00% (N= 1)	47,20% (N= 59)
No, other reasons	7,29% (N= 7)	10,71% (N= 3)	0,00% (N= 0)	8,00% (N= 10)
No Total	76,04% (N= 73)	75,00% (N= 21)	100,00% (N= 1)	76,00% (N= 95)
Yes, it could be useful	5,21% (N= 5)	21,43% (N= 6)	0,00% (N= 0)	8,80% (N= 11)
Don't know how reliable is this method	18,75% (N= 18)	3,57% (N= 1)	0,00% (N= 0)	15,20% (N= 19)
Total	100,00% (N= 96)	100,00% (N= 28)	100,00% (N= 1)	100,00% (N= 125)

If you answered “Yes”, would you prefer to take a daily pill or only one pill between 6 to 24 hours before sex and a second pill 2 to 24 hours after sex, provided they can have the same efficacy?	Had you already heard about Prep?			total
	yes	No	don't know	
A daily pill	41,24% (N= 80)	47,14% (N= 33)	0,00% (N= 0)	42,64% (N= 113)
One pill between 6 to 24 hours before sex and a second pill 2 to 24 hours after sex	51,03% (N= 99)	48,57% (N= 34)	100,00% (N= 1)	50,57% (N= 134)
Don't know	7,73% (N= 15)	4,29% (N= 3)	0,00% (N= 0)	6,79% (N= 18)
Total	100,00% (N= 194)	100,00% (N= 70)	100,00% (N= 1)	100,00% (N= 265)

If you answered “Yes”, which impact would this have on your sexual life? a) on how often you have sex	Had you already heard about Prep?			total
	yes	No	don't know	
I would have more sex	13,92% (N= 27)	5,71% (N= 4)	0,00% (N= 0)	11,70% (N= 31)
I would have sex also with people now I try not to have sex with	18,04% (N= 35)	17,14% (N= 12)	0,00% (N= 0)	17,74% (N= 47)
I would have sex with the same frequency than now	62,37% (N= 121)	70,00% (N= 49)	100,00% (N= 1)	64,53% (N= 171)
I would have sex less frequently	0,52% (N= 1)	2,86% (N= 2)	0,00% (N= 0)	1,13% (N= 3)
Don't know	5,15% (N= 10)	4,29% (N= 3)	0,00% (N= 0)	4,91% (N= 13)
Total	100,00% (N= 194)	100,00% (N= 70)	100,00% (N= 1)	100,00% (N= 265)

b) on your condom use	Had you already heard about Prep?			total
	yes	No	don't know	
I would use condoms always as I do now	25,77% (N= 50)	28,57% (N= 20)	0,00% (N= 0)	26,42% (N= 70)
Sometimes I would not use condom, which I always use now	28,35% (N= 55)	27,14% (N= 19)	100,00% (N= 1)	28,30% (N= 75)
I would use condoms almost always, as I do now	21,13% (N= 41)	24,29% (N= 17)	0,00% (N= 0)	21,89% (N= 58)
I would continue to never or almost never use condom	18,56% (N= 36)	14,29% (N= 10)	0,00% (N= 0)	17,36% (N= 46)
Don't know	6,19% (N= 12)	5,71% (N= 4)	0,00% (N= 0)	6,04% (N= 16)
Total	100,00% (N= 194)	100,00% (N= 70)	100,00% (N= 1)	100,00% (N= 265)

c) As for the HIV status of your sexual partner:	Had you already heard about PrEP?			Total
	yes	No	don't know	
I would do the same irrespectively from the knowledge I have of my partner's HIV status	36,60% (N= 71)	30,00% (N= 21)	0,00% (N= 0)	34,72% (N= 92)
I would change my behaviour according with my partner HIV status	22,16% (N= 43)	22,86% (N= 16)	100,00% (N= 1)	22,64% (N= 60)
I would change my behaviour according to the fact that my partner is a casual partner, my steady partner or my "fuck buddy" (someone I have sex with from time to time)	34,02% (N= 66)	42,86% (N= 30)	0,00% (N= 0)	36,23% (N= 96)
Don't know	7,22% (N= 14)	4,29% (N= 3)	0,00% (N= 0)	6,42% (N= 17)
Total	100,00% (N= 194)	100,00% (N= 70)	100,00% (N= 1)	100,00% (N= 265)