OPTIONS Consortium: Optimizing Prevention Technology Introduction On Schedule

PrEP and Condom Use among Female Sex Workers: Findings from a Study in South Africa

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

• The author and co-authors of this presentation declare that no conflict of interest exists with regards to the development, conduct or analysis of this research.
Background

- South Africa’s HIV epidemic remains the largest in the world with 7.9 million people living with HIV, hence the need for effective prevention methodologies\(^1\).
- In June 2016 the South African National Department of Health (NDoH) launched oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for people at substantial risk of HIV infection using a phased approach for roll-out.
- FSWs were identified as one of the key populations to be offered oral PrEP due to high HIV prevalence amongst this group in South Africa, estimated at 57.7\(^2\).
- Although PrEP is now available for HIV prevention it does not prevent STIs and unwanted pregnancies hence condom use is recommended.
- However, simultaneous use of PrEP and condoms may be a challenge but there is limited data in real world settings.
- In order to explore this, OPTIONS (Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute) and the Prevention Market Manager worked collaboratively to perform operations research in support of the National Department of Health PrEP roll out.
- Operations research is needed to learn from national PrEP rollout and improve program implementation.

(1) 9th SA AIDS Conference, 2019, (2) UNAIDS, 2019
Study Objectives

Primary Objective
Examine factors affecting clients’ decision to initiate, continue, and/or stop PrEP use

Secondary Objectives
Explore the effect of oral PrEP provision on condom use and use of other prevention methods and services

Clients

Providers & Systems
Assess service provider knowledge, attitudes, and practiced behaviours around oral PrEP delivery

Knowledge Sources
Examine the effectiveness of oral PrEP marketing and communication mechanisms
The study was conducted at 7 sites across 4 provinces:

• PHRU Soweto (Peri-urban)
• Wits RHI Tshwane (Urban)
• THCA eThekwini (Urban)
• THCA uMkhanyakude (Urban)
• NSA Hoedspruit (Rural)
• NSA Musina (Rural)

• Health facilities purposively selected
• Selection based on site:
  o having been providing PrEP for at least 3 months
  o delivery model (fixed/mobile)
  o geographical location (rural, urban or peri-urban)
  o rates of oral uptake (~2% to ~50% of individuals with negative HIV test) based on routine data monitoring at the time
Methodology and Sample Size

**Study Design**
- Cross-sectional descriptive study

**Recruitment**
- Individuals accessing services at 7 health facilities were enrolled during waiting periods or after a clinic visit

**Enrolment**
- Self-identified female sex workers (aged 18 and above) were enrolled for cross-sectional interviewer administered survey
  - 156 FSW participated in the survey
  - 9 FSW participated in follow up in depth interviews
Participants’ PrEP Use Status (n=156)

- Past users: 43
- Current users: 57
- Never users: 56

Frequency
Demographics

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<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35+</th>
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<td>34</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
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</table>

**Education**
- At least 12 years of formal education: 28%
- Up to grade 11: 11%
- Up to Primary School: 28%
- No formal schooling: 3%

**Relationship status**
- Single / Never Married: 65%
- In a relationship: 30%
- Married: 3%
- Other: 1%

**Tested for HIV**
- Ever tested: 97%
- Tested in the past 6 months: 86%
Condom use at last sex highest with clients

“I am a sex worker, but I have a boyfriend as well…. I told him that I will use a condom with other people, but he and I don’t use a condom...We have both gone for tests and we are both HIV negative and, so we stopped using a condom.” (22 year old FSW, PrEP Never user)
Current PrEP users think condoms and PrEP work equally well for them

"Thinking about both condoms and oral PrEP, which method would you say works better for you?"

Past PrEP users (%)  Current PrEP users (%)

- Both, 19
- Oral PrEP, 5
- Neither, 5
- Condoms, 72
- Both, 70
- Oral PrEP, 18
- Condoms, 12

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Current PrEP users reported it was easy & important to use condoms & PrEP together

• Most PrEP current users reported that it was easy to use PrEP and condoms simultaneously with main partners (90%) and clients (91%).
• In the IDIs a FSW highlighted the importance of using both PrEP and condoms:

“...and using PrEP doesn’t mean you don’t use a condom as well especially if we came back drunk from partying. I would still need to be comfortable and enjoy our sex safely, and also for his safety but still make him feel I’m his loving fiancée as well.”

(30 year old FSW, current PrEP user)
Challenges with simultaneous condom & PrEP use

- IDIs revealed that clients removed condoms and offered more money to "trick" or "tempt" participants into having sex without them.
- In the IDIs, some FSW described the challenge of using condoms and PrEP with clients and partners:

  "I don’t tell my clients [about using PrEP]... then they’ll want to change your mind or tempt you into sexing without a condom by offering you more money, saying things like ‘but you are protected from infections and my own status is negative... so let’s just do it skin to skin.’ No way I’m not protecting myself although more money is tempting.”

  (30 year old FSW, current PrEP user)

  “I am a single mother and maintain my children on my own because I am not with their father anymore.... I use PrEP because I might find another man and if I don’t know him and not know if they are sick or not.... In the first instance, I was using a condom but then I found a boyfriend and he doesn’t want to use a condom anymore, so I decided to use PrEP in case he was sick and that virus will not come to me.”

  (27 year old FSW, current PrEP user)
Key takeaways & conclusions

Irrespective of PrEP status, FSWs have lower rates of condom use with main partners.

Current PrEP users seemed to find it easy to use both condoms and PrEP together.

There is need to reinforce counselling messages about the risks in regular and casual partnerships.

Condom use among the PrEP past users is low which could be an indication of a struggle with user-dependent interventions among the group. Behavioural interventions targeted at such groups such as risk reduction counselling could assist in the HIV prevention efforts. Past users are also a potential target for less user dependent interventions in the pipeline such as the ring.

There is need to explore ways of improving condom use with or without PrEP in this high risk population.
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Thank you
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