

Identifying the Barriers to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Access: A Narrative Inquiry Study into the Experiences of Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) in Canada

Researcher Information

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Research Question

What are the barriers to PrEP access among men who have sex with men in Canada?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the experiences related to PrEP access among MSM in Canada.
2. To identify barriers to PrEP access among MSM in Canada through narrative inquiry.

Background

Although pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is proven to be safe and effective in preventing possible HIV infection, utilization of the medication by MSM has been lower than required to control the HIV epidemic (Marks et al., 2017). Despite the availability of PrEP, numbers of studies have found that different barriers limit PrEP access among MSM (Bauermeister et al., 2013; Underhill et al., 2015). Eaton and colleagues (2017) reported that since the FDA approval of PrEP in 2012, the uptake of the medication among MSM has been slow because of different challenges including PrEP accessibility. MSM who are at high-risk for contracting HIV and are willing to use PrEP also reported challenges accessing the medication (Rana et al., 2018). Review of the literature found that there is no qualitative research identifying the different barriers to PrEP access among MSM, especially among those living in Canada. Therefore, given the increasing rate of new HIV infection among MSM in Canada (Grace et al., 2018), the researcher strongly believes that it is timely and relevant to conduct a research that will answer the proposed research question.

Research Method and Approach

In this narrative inquiry, I will inquire into the experiences of MSM living in Canada, reflective of time, place, and social contexts. Between September 2020 and December 2021, I will engage with 5 HIV-negative MSM living in Alberta, Canada who tried to access PrEP through the Canadian health care system. Data or field texts will be collected through a series of semi-structured interviews and through forming intensive and long-term relationships with the participants. Afterward, I will compose narrative accounts, which are reflective of the participants' experiences, especially those related to accessing PrEP. Laying these accounts side by side, I will identify resonant themes through thematic analysis (using NVivo), which will form the foundation of final research texts. Institutional ethics approval and relational ethics, which is at the heart of each narrative inquiry study, will both be addressed. Lastly, knowledge translation will be conducted in the form of publications, conference presentations, and educational outreach, among others.

Expected Findings/Outcomes

Through the researcher's long-term commitment to individual participants, he will gain insights into their decision making over time, their social, familial, and political contexts, and most importantly, the barriers they face when accessing PrEP. The findings from this proposed research can be utilized to inform stakeholders and decision-makers to advance practice guidelines and health policies that will improve PrEP access among MSM in Canada.



Overall, through this proposed research, the researcher hopes to improve PrEP access among Canadian MSM and to decrease the new HIV infections within this population.