One size will not fit all: Divergent stated preferences for new antiretroviral-based HIV prevention products across adults, adolescents and female sex workers in South Africa

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Introduction

• South Africa has a generalised HIV epidemic, population prevalence is estimated at 12.2% and incidence is persistently high among some groups1
• An adolescent female is 8 times more likely to be HIV positive than a male of the same age.2 Estimates suggest 20% of the 350,000 annual HIV infections in South Africa are among persons connected with sexual work2
• Antiretroviral-based pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is effective in preventing HIV infection3, and is increasingly being implemented in many contexts (including South Africa among female sex workers)4
• This study used a discrete choice experiment (DCE) to elicit preferences for five PrEP delivery methods (oral PrEP, microbicide gel, a SILCS diaphragm, an intravaginal ring, and an injectable ARV) among three population groups: adult females, adolescent females (aged 16-17) and female sex workers (FSWs)

Methods

• This DCE was developed through a literature review, a thematic analysis of focus group discussions, and then piloted with participants and HIV prevention experts
• Data were collected from four populations in urban Ekurhuleni. 675 people self-reported as HIV negative and completed the DCE:

Results

• Injectable PrEP was favoured by all groups (Figure 2), particularly among adult women and female sex workers
• Multipurpose protection from HIV, other sexually-transmitted infections, and pregnancy was valued by all groups

Figure 2: Predicted uptake by product protection

Adolescent women

Adult women

Female sex workers

Conclusions

• Understanding user preferences is critical to ensuring new HIV prevention products are appropriately implemented among key groups
• Respondents from all population groups expressed favourable preferences for injectable ARV products and valued multipurpose prevention methods
• Uptake and impact modelling should consider differential uptake and use by group accounting for variation in preferences
• Results support the integration of HIV prevention services into other sexual health and contraceptive services

References

2 SANCAP. National Strategic Plan for HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment for Sex Workers. Pretoria. 2013
4 Department of Health, South Africa. Guidelines for Expanding Combination Prevention and Treatment Options for Sex Workers: Oral Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Test and Treat (T&T). Final Draft, May 2016