

Title: Acceptability and barriers to uptake of HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis among female sex workers in Harare, a cross sectional study.

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Introduction: The occurrence of incident HIV infections has continued to be of significant concern despite several interventions implemented to control the epidemic. Recently introduced antiretroviral medications taken daily while HIV negative can be used to reduce new infections especially among young women in Sub-Saharan Africa who are at a disproportionately higher risk of HIV acquisition.

Methods: We conducted the study to determine the proportion of female sex workers coming to a PSI (Population Services International) run clinic for other clinical services who would accept to use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and to explore the factors associated with uptake of this relatively new HIV preventive measure. We also investigated the challenges that young women were likely to face in accessing the intervention. A cross sectional

study using an interviewer administered questionnaire was used to explore these factors and challenges among those who either accept or decline to take PrEP.

Results: Among the 72 female sex worker participants there was high PrEP acceptability of 90.3% (95 % CI 80.7% to 95.4%) when offered PrEP in a clinic setting. The sex workers were aware of their risk of HIV and motivated to take PrEP daily despite being reminded of side effects, condom use, frequent testing, and costs to access PrEP.

Conclusion: – We concluded that female sex workers are willing to accept PrEP as part of routine clinical care. Policy makers and program managers should rapidly implement PrEP as part of the combination HIV prevention package to help eliminate new HIV infections.