PREP AND EARLY ART FOR FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE TAPS PROJECT

University of the Witwatersrand
WITS RHI

Robyn Eakle[1,2‡], Gabriela B Gomez[1,2,3‡], Niven Naicker[1], Rutendo Bothma[1], Judie Mbogua[1], Maria A Cabrera Escobar[1], Elaine Saayman[4], Michelle Moorhouse[1], W D Francois Venter[1], Helen Rees[1,2] on behalf of the TAPS Demonstration Project Team

1 Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute, 2 London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 3 Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development, 4 Sediba Hope Medical Centre

Background

Operational research is required to design delivery of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and early antiretroviral treatment (early ART). This paper presents the primary analysis of the TAPS Demonstration Project, a demonstration project offering both interventions to female sex workers (FSWs) in two urban clinic sites in South Africa.

Methods

TAPS was a prospective, observational cohort study with two arms delivered in existing service settings: 1) PrEP for HIV-negative FSWs, and 2) early ART for HIV-positive FSWs. The main outcome was retention at 12 months. We also present uptake, adherence, key demographic characteristics, number of sero-conversions, virological failures and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as changes in sexual behaviour among participants and cost of services.

TAPS Eligibility Criteria

PrEP arm
- HIV-negative
- 18 years or older
- Creatinine clearance above 60.0 mL/min
- Negative for hepatitis B
- Not pregnant
- Does not have MDR-TB
- Not taking other contraindicated drugs

Early ART arm
- HIV-positive
- 18 years or older
- Creatinine clearance above 60.0 mL/min
- CD4 count above national standard for ART initiation
- Not pregnant
- Does not have MDR-TB
- Not taking other contraindicated drugs

Results

Of the 947 FSWs seen in clinic, 692 were HIV tested. HIV prevalence was 49%. Among those returning to clinic after testing and confirmed clinical eligibility, 98% (219/224) and 94% (139/148) took up PrEP and early ART, respectively. Of those enrolled, 22% on PrEP and 60% on early ART were seen at 12 months. The majority of women were married or had a steady partner, worked in brothels, and were born in Zimbabwe. Little change was seen over time in consistent condom use or the number of sexual partners, with high levels of consistent condom use with clients and low use with main partners in both study arms. There were no seroconversions on PrEP and seven virological failures on early ART. Total cost of service delivery was approximately $126 for PrEP and $406 for early ART per person-year.

Figure 1. TAPS Uptake

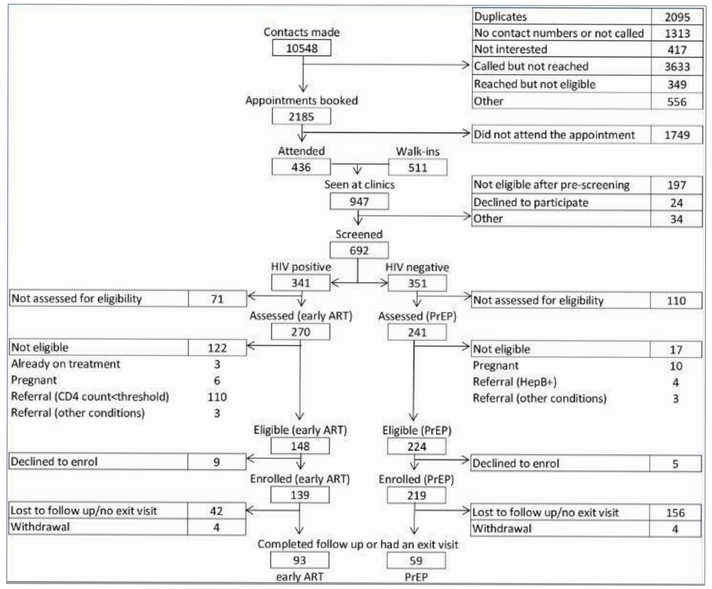


Figure 2. Reported condom use (A: PrEP; C: Early ART)

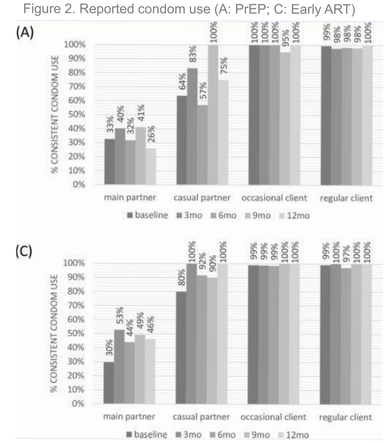


Figure 3. No. of partners over time (B: PrEP; D: Early ART)

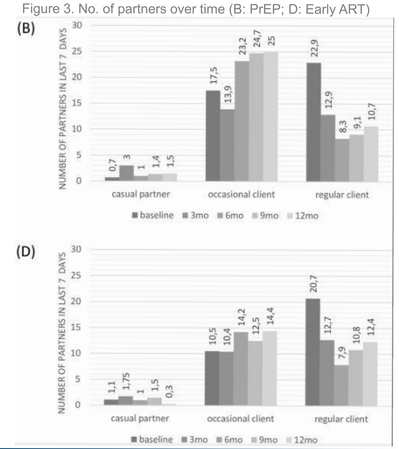
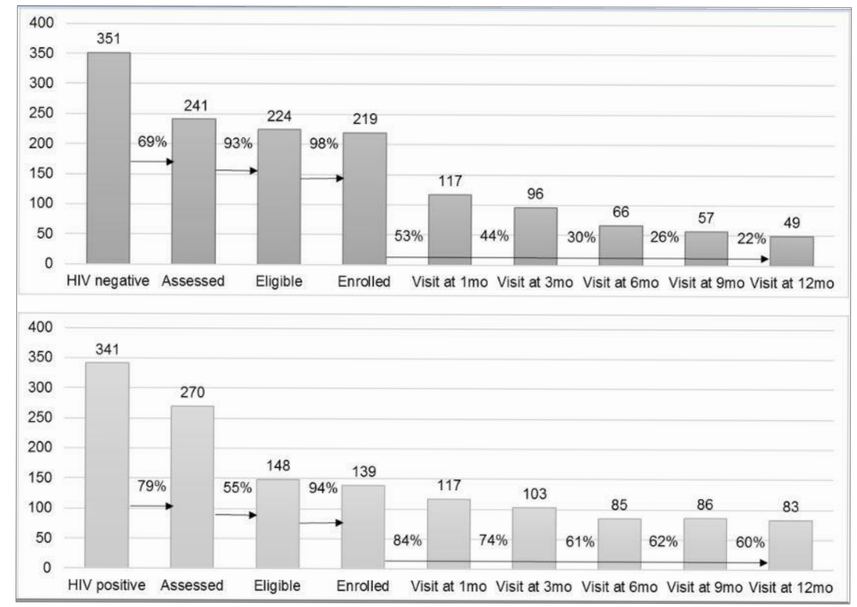


Figure 4. HIV testing through retention at 12 months



Conclusion

PrEP and early ART services can be implemented within FSWs routine services in high prevalence, urban settings, with good uptake for both PrEP and early ART. In this study retention was challenging among FSWs on PrEP, but those who remained were consistent in attendance and reported adherence. It is important to note that there was no mass media promoting the interventions which could have affect uptake and retention. Costs of the TAPS programme were higher than previously published, however there is potential for cost reduction at scale. The TAPS demonstration project results provided the basis for the first government PrEP and early ART guidelines and the roll out of a national sex worker plan in South Africa.

References:
1. Gomez GB, Eakle R, Mbogua J, Akpomiemie G, Venter WDF, Rees H. Treatment And Prevention for female Sex workers in South Africa: protocol for the TAPS Demonstration Project. BMJ Open. 2016 Sep 1;6(9):e011595.
2. Eakle R, Gomez GB, Naicker N, Bothma R, Mbogua J, Escobar MAC, et al. HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis and early antiretroviral treatment among female sex workers in South Africa: Results from a prospective observational demonstration project. PLOS Med. 2017 Nov 21;14(11):e1002444.

aighd
BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation
USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
PEPFAR
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

Poster#1046