

Psychosocial and multi professional approach to the enrolment of adolescents under 18 years old in PrEP services in Brazil.

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Background

Enrolling adolescents under 18 in HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is challenging because of the low-HIV risk perception and lack of accurate information on HIV prevention. The psychosocial approach of multidisciplinary health teams can improve adolescents' persistence in PrEP. We aimed to describe the experience of a psychosocial team in enrolling adolescent men who have sex with men (aMSM) and transgender women (aTGW) in a PrEP service in Brazil.

Description

PrEP1519 is a prospective, multicentre, open-label cohort study of PrEP demonstration of aMSM and aTGW aged 15-19 years in Brazil from April 2019 to December 2021. In this project, the multidisciplinary health team adopted a psychosocial approach in the work of the psychologist and social worker in the PrEP1519 Salvador unit. Following the guidelines agreed with the legal institutions for the protection of adolescents, the team assessed the population by analyzing situations of violence, unstructured families, and other vulnerabilities and, when possible, promoted dialogue with the adolescent's family to explain the use of PrEP. The conditions of risk of exposure to HIV infection and social vulnerability are discussed during clinical care and recorded in questionnaires. Situations such as condom use at first sexual intercourse, violence and discrimination by gender identity and sexual orientation, having already been tested for HIV in life, and receptive or insertive anal sex without a condom in the last six months is evaluated.



Lessons

79 adolescents aged 15 to 17 were included in this analysis. Of these, 24 were enrolled in PrEP without their parents' or guardians' awareness of the team's conclusion of a possible risk of violence against adolescents. We communicated this procedure to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Juvenile Court of the State of Bahia. Conversely, we enrolled 18 adolescents based on dialogue with their legal guardians.

Flow for inclusion of minors



Conditions for inclusion of minors without the consent of a legal guardian:
Meet the general inclusion criteria;
Suffer violence or discrimination by the family due to their gender identity or sexual orientation;
Risk of violence in case of disclosure of their gender identity or sexual orientation; Loss of family ties;
Diagnosis of STI or situations with increased risk of STI

Conclusions/ Next steps

The psychosocial approach to adolescents aged 15 to 17 years was significant for the enrollment of this population in a PrEP service. In Brazil, the experience of PrEP1519 provided the basis for the inclusion of adolescents 15 years and older in the PrEP policy of the SUS (Sistema Único de Saúde - Unified Health System) without the need for consent of a legal guardian. Therefore, this experience can inspire programs to facilitate the inclusion of young adolescents in PrEP. Enrolling adolescents in PrEP is challenging due to the absence of preventive health culture and low HIV risk perception. Establishing a good link with adolescents and building a dialogue that raises awareness about care is essential. Dialogue with families and legal institutions for the defense of childhood and adolescence is equally challenging. The participation of a psychosocial team can be meaningful in this process.

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