

Why I Quit: A Mixed Methods Examination of the Reasons Gay and Bisexual Men Give for Stopping a PrEP Regimen

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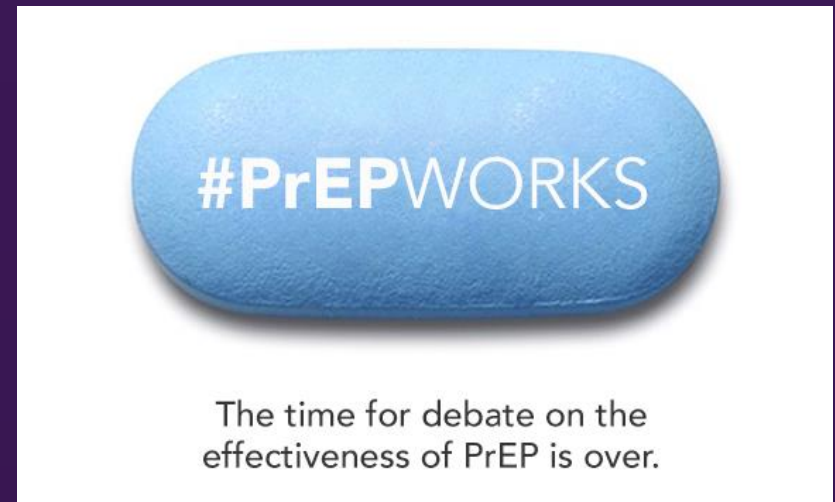
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Background

- PrEP has been shown to be efficacious in randomized clinical trials and effective in open label extensions.
- Since the approval by both the CDC and USFDA in 2012, it is estimated that there may be as many as 30,000 individuals in the U.S. currently taking PrEP



Question:

What are the reasons GBM have for discontinuing their PrEP regimen?

Methods

One Thousand Strong:

Syndemics & Resilience for HIV Transmission in a National Sample of Vulnerable Men

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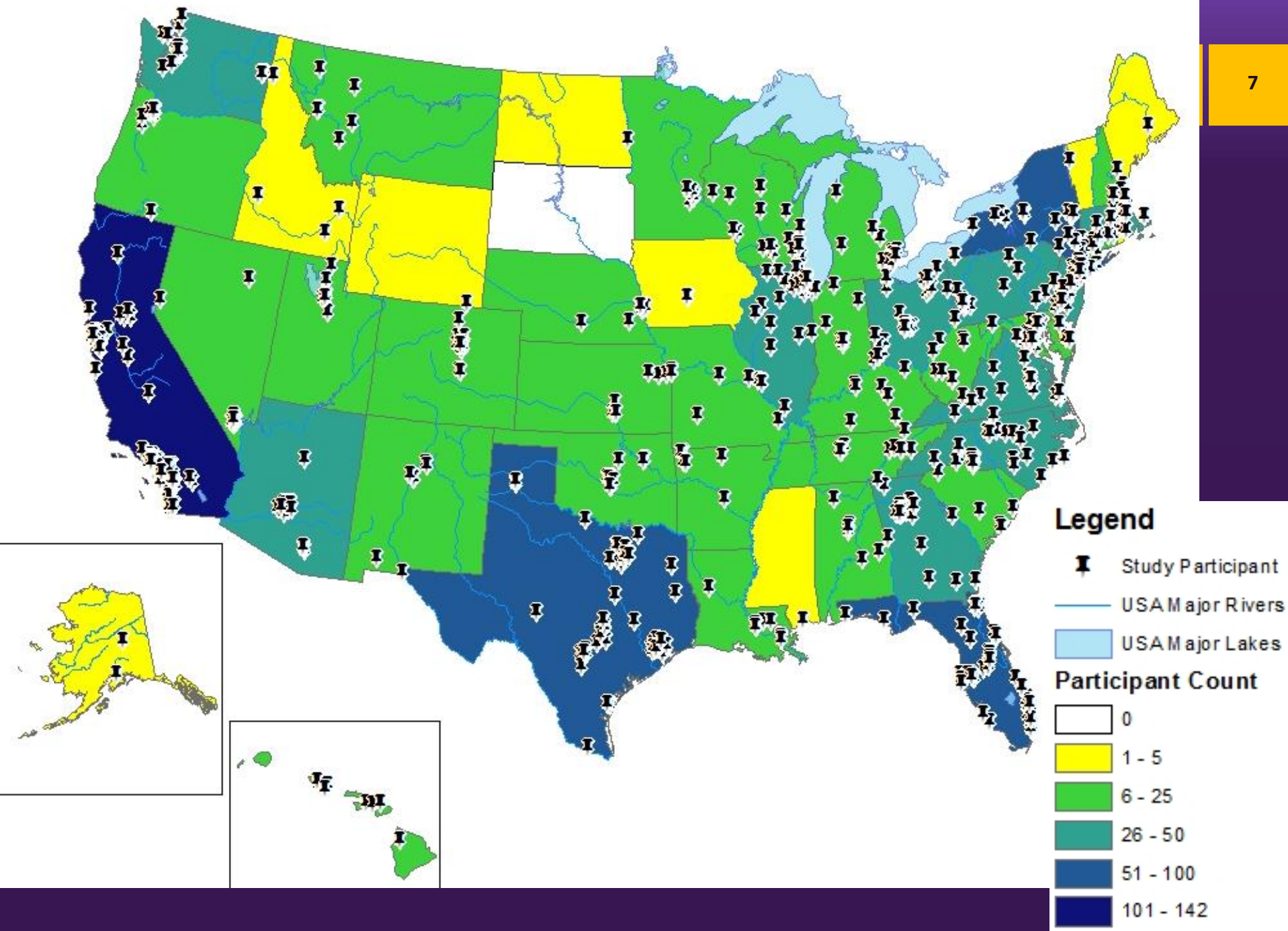


CHEST

Center for HIV Educational
Studies & Training

Participants & Procedures

- Potential participants were screened by Community Marketing Insights, Inc. (CMI) from over 22K GBM across the US.
- Eligibility
 - Live in U.S. with permanent mailing address
 - 18 years or older
 - Biologically male and identify as male
 - English comprehension
 - Internet access
 - Device for taking digital pictures
 - Self-identify as HIV-negative and willing to complete at-home self-administered rapid HIV antibody testing and testing for urethral and rectal chlamydia and gonorrhea
 - Report having sex with another man in the past year



For this study

- Have you ever been prescribed HIV medications (e.g., Truvada) for use as PrEP (HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis).
 - Yes, I am currently prescribed PrEP
 - **Yes, but I am no longer prescribed PrEP**
 - No, I've never been prescribed PrEP



More PrEP Questions

- Compared to now, when you used to be on PrEP were you more or less likely to discuss HIV status with your partners?
 - 1= much less likely, 4 = no change, 7 = much more likely.

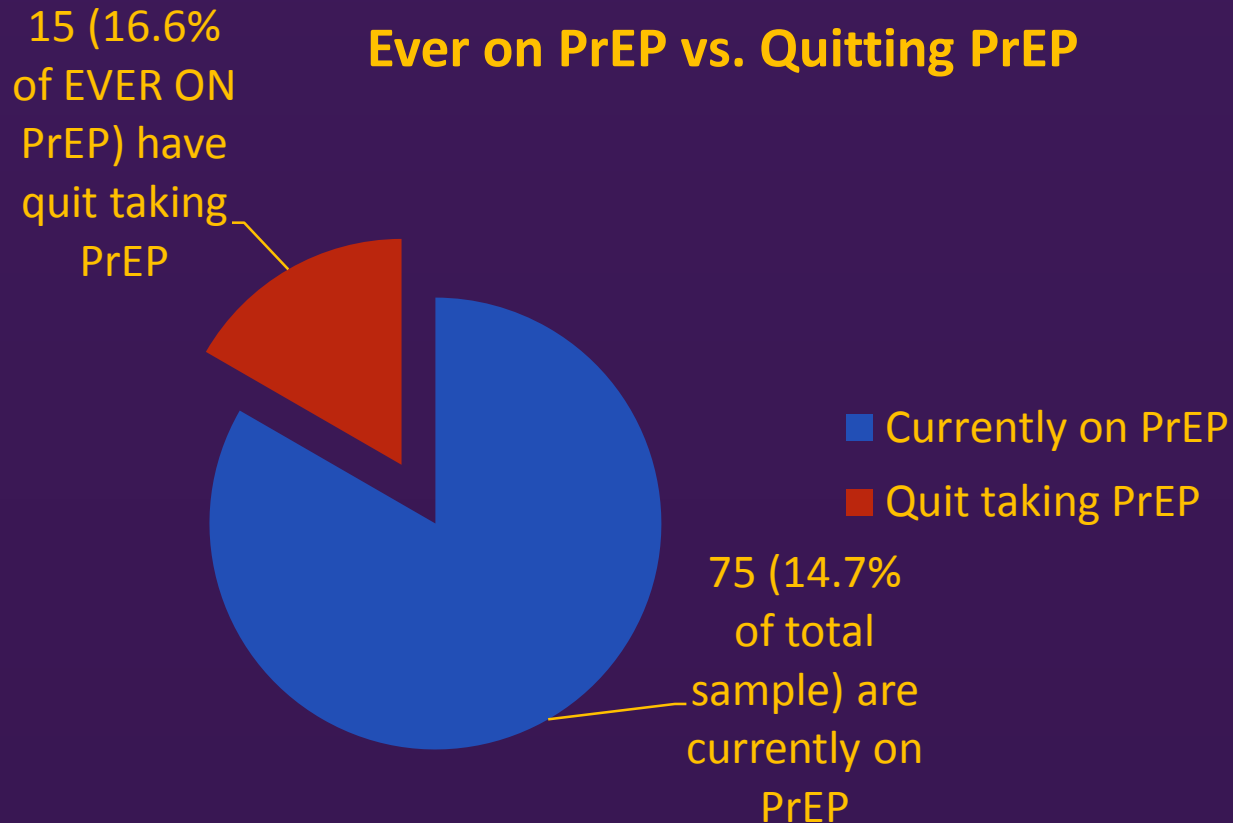
- Compared to now, when you used to be on PrEP were you more or less tempted to have sex without a condom?
 - 1 = Much less tempted, 4 = not differently tempted, 7 = much more tempted

Why'd you quit?

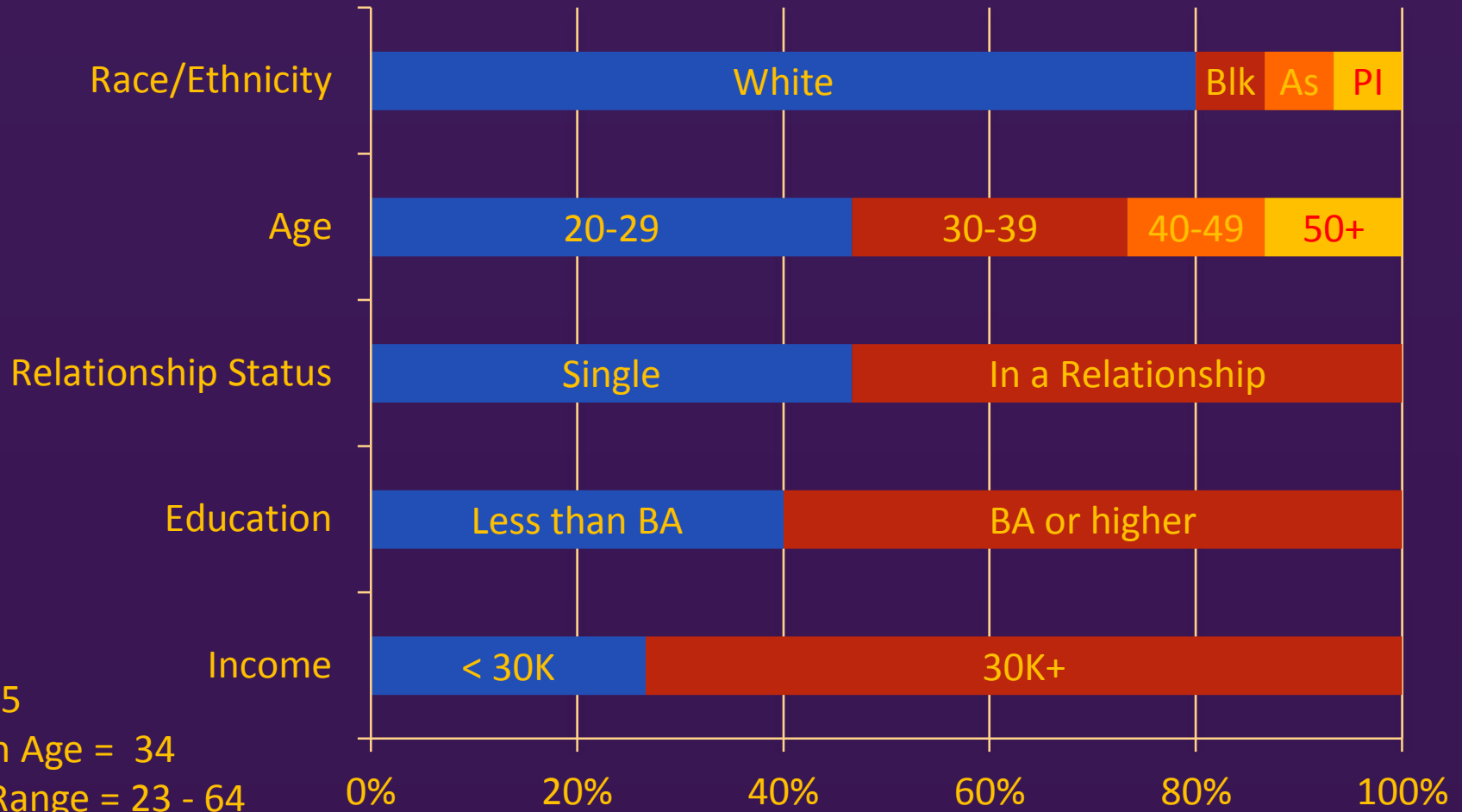
- We are interested in knowing more about the reasons you began taking PrEP and what caused you to stop. Please provide as much information as you're willing about how/why you came to start and later stop your PrEP regimen.

Results

PrEP discontinuation



Demographic Characteristics



N = 15

Mean Age = 34

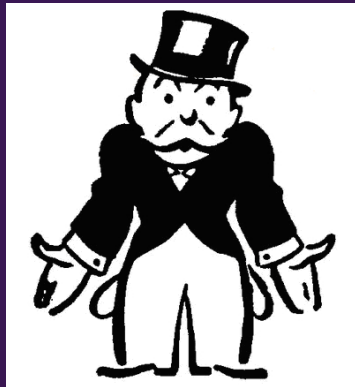
Age Range = 23 - 64

Behavior change and temptation

- On average, compared to being off PrEP, now...
 - They were slightly more likely ($M = 4.73$) to discuss HIV status when on PrEP compared to now.
 - No difference in their temptation to have CAS ($M = 4.07$).

This is why they quit...

- Risk reduction
 - Four said they stopped engaging in condomless anal sex
 - Two entered monogamous relationships
- Three reported insurance coverage issues
- Two reported negative side effects
- One “I can’t afford it.”



Quotes

“I took PrEP as a part of a study. I stopped when the study ended.”

23, Black, College Degree, Under 30K

“Sexually active and opposed to condoms. A perfect candidate for prep. I started, and had no problems. Then I found out (through one thousand strong) that I had contracted chlamydia. I had been solely focused on just avoiding HIV, and I was reminded about the many other risks. So I decided to save my \$50 a month copay, reduce sexual partners, as well as risky behaviors.”

54, White, College Degree, Above 30K

“...Once I knew I was committed to my sobriety I made the decision to stop taking PrEP 1) because I was only "hooking up" or engaging in high risk behavior when I was under the influence of alcohol 2) I also made the decision to not have casual sex and have not had any sexual partners since becoming sober and 3) if I do decide to start having sex it will be with a clear head, sober mind, that will make better decisions. I would also like my next partner to be a monogamous one and I know I will have the necessary conversation with my partner about their status, and will use condoms 100% of the time. If in the future I decide to engage with multiple partners or behavior that is high risk again I know PrEP is available and would have no problem starting a regimen again...”

White, 24, College Degree, Above 30K

“I started taking it because my partner is positive. I stopped taking it because I wasn't keeping up with it, I have protected sex with my partner, and his viral load is undetectable.”

28, White, College Degree, Above 30K

Discussion

Implications

- These findings may support the “seasons of risk” hypothesis about GBM sexual behavior. Can PrEP also be implemented as a “seasons of risk” prevention tool?
- Some GBM are educated about when PrEP may and may not be a valuable option based on behavior.
- If these findings are projected into the possible 30,000 prescribers, apx. 5,000 will stop taking PrEP.

Remaining Questions

- Are GBM more or less likely to engage in a PrEP regimen in the future after having stopped once before?
- Knowing that HIV is still transmitted in what are perceived to be monogamous relationships, how do we address the importance of sexual risk negotiation/discussion within relationships and the role PrEP may play?
- What is the stigma associated with both being in a monogamous relationship and staying on PrEP?

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Thank you

For a copy of these slides or further questions,
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