



Press Release

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Public Health Service of Amsterdam to start trial with PrEP in fight against HIV

The Public Health Service (GGD) is launching the Amsterdam PrEP project (AMPPrEP): a demonstration project regarding PrEP implementation for HIV prevention among gay men and transgender people in Amsterdam. PrEP is a pill containing HIV medication that prevents HIV infection and is for people who are not infected with HIV but may be at increased risk of becoming infected. Aim of this project is to investigate how many men would want to use PrEP, how consistently tablets are taken, how they experience using PrEP and whether PrEP use changes their use of condoms. This is the first time research into PrEP will be conducted in the Netherlands and the first time worldwide that participants in a pilot project are given a choice between daily PrEP or PrEP according to an established schedule before and after sex without a condom. Recent international research shows that PrEP is highly effective: new HIV infections decrease by 86%.

New approach to preventing HIV

The number of new HIV infections has remained stable in recent years. The Netherlands has around 1,100 new HIV patients each year, 370 of whom are linked to care in Amsterdam. In 2013, 71% of all new HIV infections were identified among gay men. This group, supplemented with transgender people who are also at increased risk of HIV infection, has therefore been chosen as the prioritized population for this research project.

New HIV infections take place despite all the disseminated information about safe sex, the availability of cheap condoms, and care for vulnerable groups conducted through STI outpatient clinics, such as provision of free testing for STI and HIV. New methods such as PrEP are needed to further reduce the number of new HIV infections. PrEP complements existing prevention strategies, such as condoms.

The research project, in which 370 men can participate, focuses on interest in starting PrEP (how many people sign up, why people want to get involved), patient compliance (whether participants take tablets as advised), what it is like to use PrEP, and whether the costs of such a program outweigh the costs saved by preventing people from becoming infected with HIV. The participants will have a choice between daily PrEP or PrEP according to an established schedule before and after anal sex without a condom. The Public Health Service Amsterdam will follow all participants very closely, as regards of both their health and sexual behavior, including condom use. Those interested can sign up through the website of the Public Health Service of Amsterdam (GGD). The project will run from July 2015 until mid 2018.

Results of the project

The Public Health Service Amsterdam will use the results of the project to present recommendations on whether or not to include PrEP as a standard intervention for preventing HIV in the Netherlands.

Collaboration to prevent HIV infections

The AMPrEP project is part of a unique project started under the name H-TEAM (HIV Transmission Elimination AMsterdam), which aims to reduce the spread of HIV in the city, as well as improve the prognosis for those infected by HIV. The H-TEAM project is a collaboration among all parties involved in fighting HIV in Amsterdam and the groups the H-TEAM aims to mobilize.

The H-TEAM project interconnects all aspects of the fight against HIV. Through the development and implementation of projects improving prevention and treatment of HIV, the HIV epidemic in and outside of Amsterdam can be reduced in the longer term. If this project is successful, the approach can be rolled out nationwide.

The H-TEAM is a joint venture between among others the Amsterdam Institute of Global Health (AIGHD), Stichting HIV Monitoring (SHM), Soa Aids Netherlands, Public Health Service Amsterdam, the Netherlands HIV Patient Association, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), and general practitioners and hospitals in Amsterdam.