

PrEP use in Portugal while waiting for a policy

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BACKGROUND

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with tenofovir/emtricitabine (TDF/FTC) has shown to be effective in preventing HIV among high-risk HIV-negative men who have sex with men (MSM). These results pressure countries to make PrEP available and few are already dispensing TDF/FTC as PrEP, Portugal is not one of those.

AIM

We aimed to assess the frequency of PrEP use and its determinants in an HIV-negative MSM cohort.

METHODS

We performed a case-cohort analysis using data from the Lisbon Cohort of MSM – an open prospective cohort of adult HIV-negative MSM. We found that 28 (0.7%) MSM reported to have used PrEP, out of the 4243 MSM enrolled in the cohort as of April 2016, and we randomly selected 112 controls. Comparisons between cases and controls were performed using the Chi-square test.

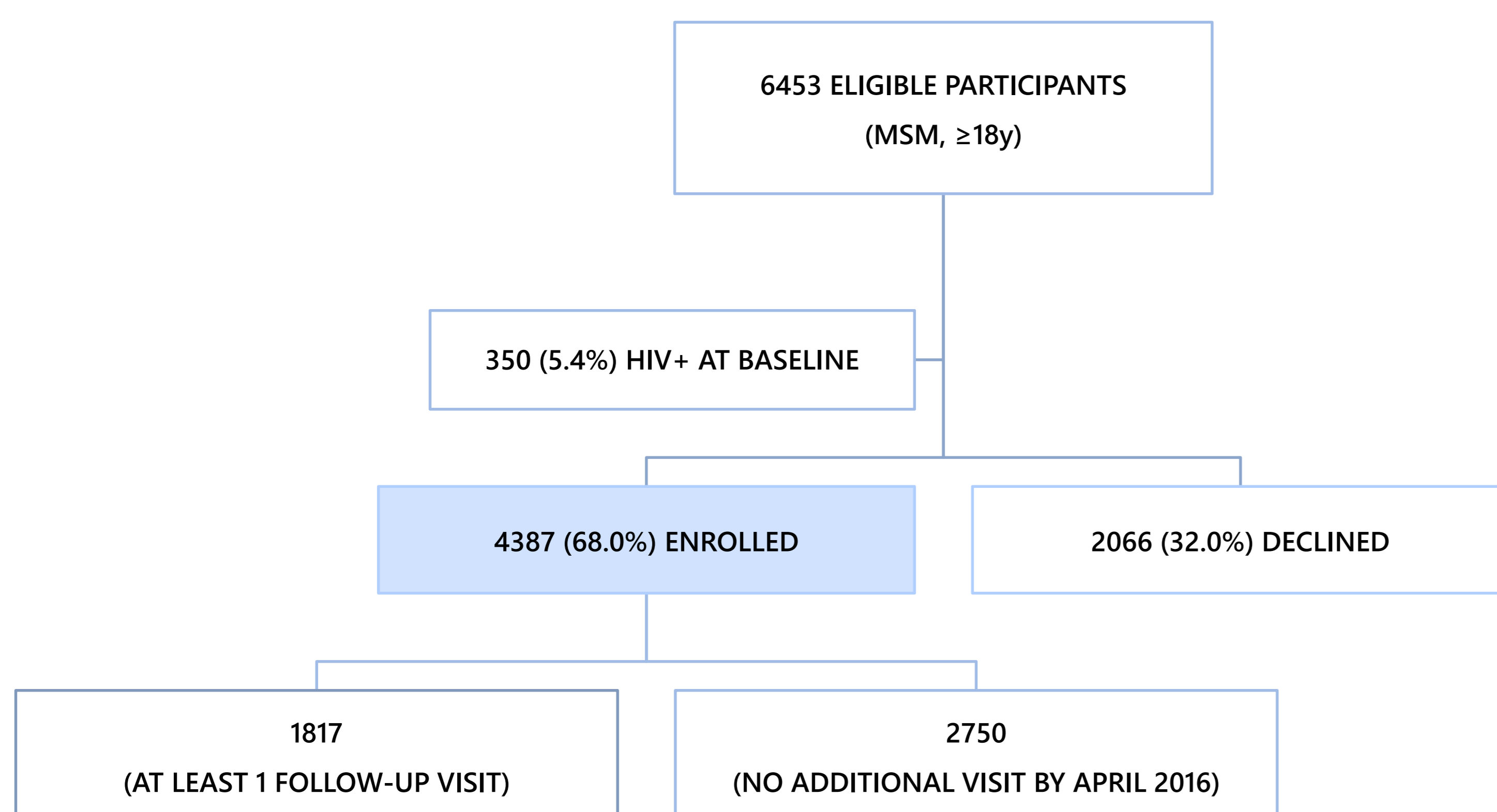


FIGURE 1. Flowchart of enrolments in the cohort as up to April 2016

RESULTS

PrEP users had a significantly higher median number of visits in the cohort (3 vs 1, $p < 0.001$), were more frequently born in other country than Portugal (39.1% vs 17.0%, $p = 0.025$) and reported more frequently to know and to have used post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) at baseline (34.6% vs 52.3% did not know about PEP and 11.5% vs 0.9% used PEP, $p = 0.014$). Groups were similar in terms of age, education, condom use with an occasional partner and with an HIV-positive steady partner and a STI diagnosis in the previous 12 months to baseline.

	PREP USE		p-value
	Never	Ever	
	112	28	
Number of visits, median (P25-P75)	1 (1-2)	3 (2-4)	<0.001
Age strata			0.062*
18-24	42 (37.5)	6 (21.4)	
25-34	38 (33.9)	16 (57.1)	
35-44	19 (17.0)	3 (10.7)	
45-54	13 (11.6)	2 (7.1)	
55-65	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	
Education			0.784
Basic education or less (≤ 9 years)	3 (2.8)	1 (3.7)	
Secondary education (12 years)	37 (33.9)	10 (37.0)	
Higher education	69 (63.3)	16 (59.3)	
Country of birth			0.025*
Portugal	88 (83.0)	14 (60.9)	
Other	18 (17.0)	9 (39.1)	
Condom use with occasional partner			0.141
Often/Occasionally/Rarely/Never	47 (43.5)	8 (29.6)	
Always	45 (41.7)	17 (63.0)	
Did not have an occasional partner	16 (14.8)	2 (7.4)	
Condomless anal intercourse with an HIV positive steady partner in the previous 12 months			0.345*
No	108 (96.4)	26 (92.6)	
Yes	4 (3.6)	2 (7.1)	
Sexually transmitted infection diagnosis in the previous 12 months			0.694*
None	102 (91.1)	27 (96.4)	
At least one	10 (8.9)	1 (3.6)	
Knowledge and use of post-exposure prophylaxis			0.014
Did not know	58 (52.3)	9 (34.6)	
Knew but never used	52 (46.8)	14 (53.8)	
Used	1 (0.9)	3 (11.5)	

*p-value for the Fisher-exact test

TABLE 1. Comparison of main sociodemographic and behavioural characteristics between PrEP users and non-users.

CONCLUSION

Despite not being approved for prevention there are some MSM already using TDF/FTC in Portugal. Even though the number of PrEP users is small, our results show that these men are more frequently born abroad and are particularly concerned with their protection.

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