



Investigating Barriers and Enablers to Preventive HIV Access for Māori

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Aim of project

Investigate, identify and articulate the barriers and enablers to preventive HIV access, including PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) uptake in Māori

What do we already know about Māori, sexual health and HIV prevention?

- Māori are largely missing from HIV prevention research in Aotearoa, leading to rising diagnoses and increased health inequities.
- Many Māori are diagnosed late, facing barriers like stigma, discrimination, and limited access to services, especially in rural areas.
- Awareness of prevention tools like PrEP is low, and Māori men who don't identify as gay are often excluded from prevention efforts.

Research Design and Methods

- **Design:** Kaupapa Māori methodology, culturally grounded, community-led, and ethically informed
- **Participants:** 6 Māori participants with diverse backgrounds and experiences
- **Recruitment:** Community-based via trusted networks and advisory support
- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews (1–2 hours), in person and online (Feb-Aug 2024)
- **Analysis:** Inductive thematic analysis of transcribed kōrero (speech)



Findings: Knowledge and access to sexual health and HIV prevention

“There’s too much misinformation out there, people get confused and then they don’t know what to believe.”

“I’ve heard of PrEP, but I don’t know much about how to access it or if it would be right for me.”

“The whole way that their information is put together and communicated is in a very white way. Its directed in a white way towards white people.”



Internal Stigma – accessing sexual health services

“What if I see someone? I think there was a bit of shame around if I do go get checks, then I am saying that I am...you know, its weird logic. You’d be like , “I’m a slut”.”

“Its often quite a tapu topic to be engaging with and if you don’t feel like there is a supportive environment, then you’re not really likely to seek access.”



External Stigma – judgement in clinical settings

“Its very dependent on what receptionist is at the GP’s office ... how they look at you and make you feel.”

“I think when the GPS saw that I’d been there for an HIV test, his whole attitude just completely changed.”

“I think this is something within our community we don’t focus enough on - making sure that there is a non-judgmental GP workforce to serve the needs of our people.”





What works?

Non-judgmental care

Safe, mana-enhancing spaces where people feel respected

Accessible and culturally safe services

Simple, welcoming, and easy-to-navigate services

Building trust through outreach and education

Information that is easy to access and reliable

Caring and relational staff

Genuine connections make a difference

After-hours support

Flexibility removes barriers to care

One-stop-shop convenience

Everything in one place = less stress, more support



Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

- Recruitment was a major challenge, with slow progress and low initial engagement
- Sensitive nature of the topic and reinforced the importance of addressing sexual health stigma and whakamā (shame) within the community

Opportunities

- Established valuable new connections and partnerships, essential for building trust within the community
- Committed to nurturing these relationships, ensuring participants feel heard, valued, and supported beyond the scope of the project

Wrapping up the Pilot

Participant-centred report and poster: to share insights and voices from the PrEP pilot with participants, partners, and other channels

Technical report: Summarising the aims, methods, findings, and implications of the PrEP pilot

Article: Publishing the PrEP pilot findings for an international audience focused on sexual health and Indigenous health

Future focus

Rukua ki te rēkōtanga o te wai. Stemming the tide of HIV inequity in Aotearoa - HRC funded 3-year project

Objectives:

1. Investigate and document the experiences of Māori regarding sexual health and HIV prevention, in particular in relation to the use of PrEP.
2. Co-create resources to be used by study partners in the community to enable a better understanding and application of Māori-specific health delivery in regard to HIV prevention, in particular the use of PrEP.
3. Contribute to a broader programme of work done in Aotearoa regarding the elimination of HIV (National HIV Action Plan for Aotearoa New Zealand), by giving voice to previously unseen Māori experiences and subsequent needs.



Ngā Mihi!

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