

TelePrEP Experience in Brazil: A Municipal Public-Health Service for HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) using telemedicine in the city of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina.

M. Medeiros¹, F. Karolinne Melchior Silva Pinto¹, R. Zonta¹

¹- Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Background

Florianópolis, the capital of the state of Santa Catarina, an island with a population of 537.213 people recorded 9.7 deaths related with AIDS

for every 100,000 inhabitants last year - a number higher than the national rate and an AIDS detection rate of 49.1 per 100 thousand inhabitants, in need of new strategies to prevent and combat HIV.

The "The Time is Now - AHA Project" aims to enhance local responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in five Brazilian capitals, including Florianópolis, through a cooperation agreement between Fiocruz and CDC, funded by PEPFAR.

TELEPrEP

Since August 2020, Florianópolis, has offered asynchronous teleconsultations for oral PrEP (TELEPrEP). The public health facilities distribute 120-day PrEP supplies along with blood-based or oral fluid HIVST kits for clients, their peers, and sexual partners. The program operates with three prescribing physicians who conduct medical appointments through a messaging app and, in some cases, via video or audio calls with clients. During these appointments, clients answer a series of questions to assess their risk for HIV, focusing on sexual behavior and drug use, primarily using a structured form. Additional messages are shared to address any doubts. After this initial assessment, clients are scheduled an appointment for a rapid HIV test, STI tests, and other PrEP-related testing with the nursing team.

HOMEPrEP

In December 2023, we implemented an even more convenient option called HOME PrEP. HIVST (HIV Self-Testing) began being used for initiating and maintaining PrEP. The tests are available at all public health clinics in the city, delivered together with PrEP for the next appointment, and can also be requested for home delivery by mail.

During the teleconsultation, clients communicate their results via digital photos. Digital requests for STI exams and online HIVST-assisted support address client needs, integrating STI testing, treatment, and sexual and reproductive health services with clients' chosen public health facilities. Clients only need to visit for specimen collection for the tests and to pick up PrEP during the dispensing pharmacy's opening hours, without needing to book an appointment.

During the past six months, 89% of users have rated their satisfaction with the service as 9 or 10 on a scale of 0-10.

Results

The TelePrEP and HOMEPrEP model reduces average time spent at PrEP services, allowing users to access services at their convenience, including outside business hours or weekends.

Since the implementation of the asynchronous model in August 2020, client numbers have increased by 27.8%. Over the past 12 months, the PrEP retention rate was 78.5% (2,388 out of 3,041), with 20 individuals testing positive; 1 during PrEP follow-up and 19 before initiation, all linked to treatment.



Conclusions

TelePrEP and HOMEPrEP may increase PrEP access for people who live far away from main clinics that offer PrEP or who otherwise face transportation or schedule difficulties that make in-person appointments impossible or inconvenient. It could also help to overcome stigma and fears about confidentiality that keep some people from seeking PrEP care face-to-face.

These adaptations to traditional PrEP consultation and HIV testing models demonstrate how innovative, person-centered approaches can improve access to and continuity of PrEP services.



contact: michellemedeir@gmail.com, teleatendimentoprepsusfloripa@gmail.com