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Title: Limited experience with HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among fishermen in western Kenya: A qualitative analysis

Background: HIV PrEP can effectively prevent HIV infection, but lack of knowledge hinders PrEP uptake, particularly among highly-mobile fishermen residing in a high HIV prevalence region of Kenya. The purpose of this study was to assess the PrEP knowledge among fishermen along Lake Victoria, Kenya.

Methods: We conducted 65 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with fishermen from 3 fishing communities in Siaya County. Fishermen were purposively sampled based on age (< & >35 years) and beach landing site. IDI guides probed on knowledge, interests, and concerns regarding PrEP. IDIs were conducted in Luo, audio recorded, transcribed, translated into English then six researchers coded transcripts and analyzed PrEP uptake using framework analysis approach.

Results: Most participants were >35 years (56%) and were married (83%). About half (48%) had attained some primary education or higher(52%). Over half (57%) had a monthly income below 10,000 Kenya shillings. Though most participants had heard about PrEP as HIV prevention method, some incorrectly perceived it as post-exposure prophylaxis to be taken after potential HIV exposure. Fishermen who knew of PrEP were unsure of eligibility and when and how often it should be taken. Major barriers to PrEP uptake included storage, stigma and fear of disclosing to primary partner.

Conclusions: We found low knowledge and uptake of PrEP among fishermen despite its availability in health facilities. There is need to create awareness of the importance and availability of PrEP in this vulnerable population.