

PrEP as part of HIV prevention in Africa

ITM and its African and international partners will be looking into the use of PrEP in West Africa.

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Dit is de omschrijving

Starting today, the HIV/AIDS community meets in Amsterdam, for a global assessment of the current state of affairs. AIDS2018 (officially International AIDS Conference, 23-27 July) is the largest HIV conference in the world and is now on its 22nd edition. Preventive HIV medicines (PrEP or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) are more and more prominent on the agenda. In the next few years, the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) and its African and international partners will be looking into the use of PrEP in West Africa.

We know for some time that PrEP offers very good protection against HIV infection, provided it is taken according to a strict and rigorous protocol. Researchers see it as an additional prevention tool for risk groups such as gays with multiple sexual partners. ITM has been researching the use of PrEP for gay men in Belgium for several years and in June 2017 Minister Maggie De Block decided to reimburse this preventive treatment.

What role can PrEP play in reducing the widespread HIV epidemic in Africa? To find the answer to this question, African, French and ITM researchers will follow 500 gay men using PrEP in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali and Togo until the end of 2020.

"With this study we hope to gain better insight into the added value of PrEP for HIV prevention in Africa. In many African countries, the HIV epidemic is far from over and new prevention strategies are desperately needed. Circumstances are, however, very different from those in Belgium. For example, homosexuality is much less accepted and access to care is often limited," said Dr Bea Vuylsteke of ITM.

In the research consortium, ITM is responsible for testing for sexually transmitted infections. ITM researchers organised training for local laboratories and ensure quality control to facilitate this process. Within the same research project, the Institute will soon start qualitative research to assess the opinion and experiences of the gay community, study participants and health care providers in the four study countries.

The research group also produced [animated short films with information about the use of PrEP](#) for men.

Link

- [Access to PrEP for MSM: Acceptability and Feasibility in Community-based Clinics in West Africa](#) (CohMSM-PrEP)