

# Perspectives on HIV prevention of individuals who recently acquired HIV: a qualitative study at the HIV Clinic in Antwerp, Belgium

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Best poster in Public Health

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- **Background and aims**

- Increase in new HIV infections since 2020
- Explore perspectives of people recently infected themselves
- Identify factors that influence PrEP use and missed opportunities for HIV prevention

- **Methods**

- Case study approach in HIV clinic of Antwerp
- In-depth interviews (IDI)
  - attitudes towards HIV prevention
  - PrEP awareness
  - HIV risk perception
  - circumstances of HIV acquisition

# Results

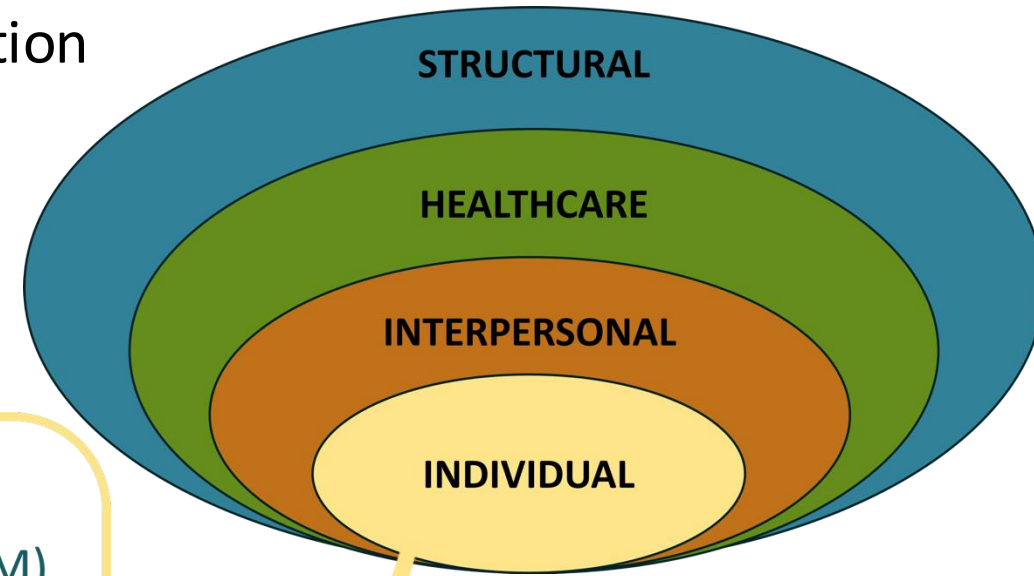
- Very diverse stories
- Most wanted to protect themselves from HIV infection
- Challenges at multiple levels

## INDIVIDUAL level

- Limited knowledge of PrEP (e.g. in non-Belgians, young MSM)
- Not feeling at risk for HIV (anymore – e.g. former PrEP users)
- Perceiving HIV as less threatening nowadays
- Concerns about PrEP and its impact on health
- Feelings of loneliness, depression or fear (of rejection), leading to reduced use of PrEP or condoms (in MSM)

N=21 (April 2024 - March 2025)

- 18 men, 3 women; mean age 38 years
- 16 MSM, 5 heterosexual
- 16 Belgian, 5 other nationality



# Results

## STRUCTURAL level

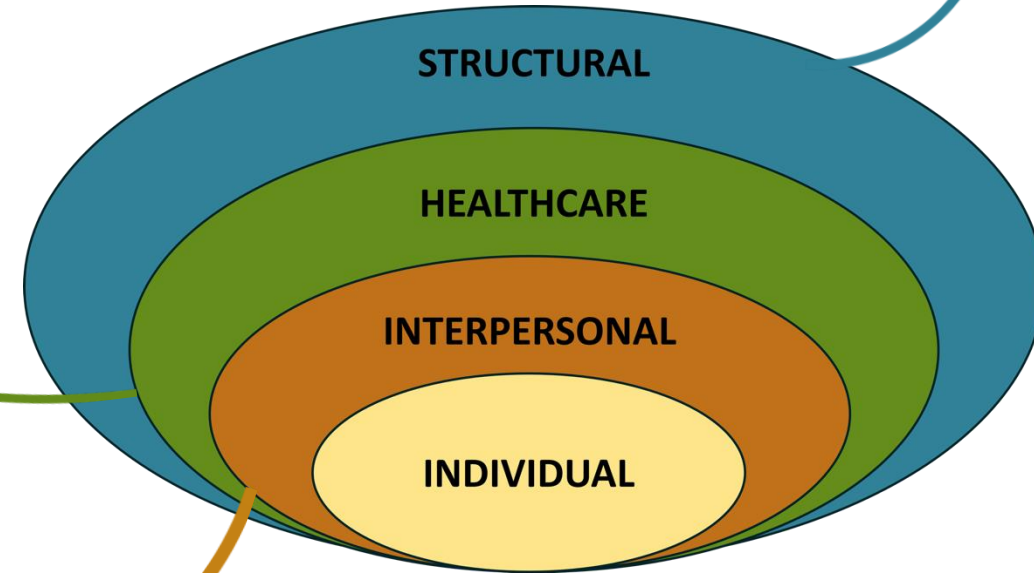
- Lack of health insurance (and thus no access to PrEP) among non-Belgians

## HEALTHCARE level

- Not offered PrEP from GP or outreach services

## INTERPERSONAL level

- Negative social norms of MSM towards condoms and PrEP
- Participating in chemsex (compromising abilities to protect)
- Confidence in regular sex partners (not telling they were HIV-positive or had risky sexual contacts outside the relationship)
- Sex workers not proposing to use condoms



# Recommendations: mitigating missed opportunities

- A more pro-active role for GPs to discuss PrEP
- Use HIV-testing as an opportunity for PrEP counseling
- Recommend chemsex users to start PrEP
- Reengage former PrEP users
- Address social norms of MSM toward condoms and PrEP
- Improve mental health and isolation of MSM
- Tailored messaging for heterosexuals and MSM with a migration background
- Ensure access to PrEP for uninsured people

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