



IMPLEMENTATION OF PrEP IN ITALY: RESULTS FROM PrIDE SURVEY

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BACKGROUND

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is considered a high-priority strategy in preventing HIV and reducing the incidence of new HIV diagnoses. In Italy, free of charge PrEP availability started in May 2023. The aim of the study was to describe the distribution and organization of PrEP centers and the PWH/PrEP ratio in centers participating in PrIDE.

METHODS

We designed and submitted to ethical committee a protocol to implement PrEP in the ICONA national network (PrIDE protocol- Implementation of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis across the Italian Cohort Naive Antivirals) and preliminarily collected data on PrEP users in Italy through a survey on 62 PrEP centers among the ICONA cohort from the 29th November 2023 to the 1st of February 2023, and 3 checkpoints focused on the number of individuals in PrEP, new individuals in PrEP in 2023, organization of PrEP services (in particular presence of services dedicated to PrEP), and physicians involved.

RESULTS

All the 62 centers completed the survey. PrEP is offered in 57 (92%): 45 (78.9%) have a PrEP unit, and 12 (21.1%) follow individuals in PrEP in other clinics (e.g., services dedicated to PWH). 11,675 –at-risk persons ever started PrEP, and 9,221 were in active follow-up in 2024. The distribution of PrEP users was unequal in all Italian regions: 50.1% of individuals were in Lombardia and 17.9% in Lazio. After the PrEP reimbursement in 2023, 12 new centers were opened in Italy, and 4,276 new persons started PrEP, representing 36.6% of all individuals who started PrEP in Italy, 42.47% in Lombardia, and 23.7% in Lazio. The mean number of physicians per PrEP service was not equally distributed. They are 3.5 in Lombardia, 3.4 in Lazio, and 5.6 in Emilia Romagna, partly involved in PrEP management. Accordingly, the number of PrEP users per physician differed across regions: 101.1 in Lombardia and 54.2 in Lazio, indicating a lower number of doctors and/or a higher request in Lombardia. According to the ICONA data, the PWH/PrEP ratio was 6.84 in Lombardia and 9.60 in Lazio (Figure 1). 12/62 PrEP centers were opened after PrEP reimbursement (Figure 2).

Ratio of PWH over PrEP user in ICONA centers

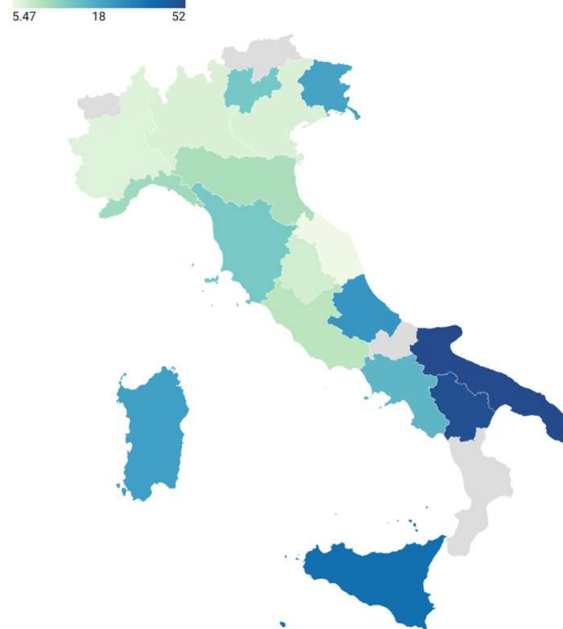


Fig 1 Ratio of People Living With HIV (PLWH) monitored by ICONA centers, over the number of PrEP users undergoing follow-up care within these centers as of 2023



Fig 2 ICONA centers that prescribe PrEP

CONCLUSION

Implementation of PrEP in Italy is currently rapid in two regions, Lombardia and Lazio, which represent 67.5% of all individuals in PrEP. The availability of a-PrEP free of charge increased access and prescriptions. Despite the overall increase in PrEP use, the organization and work pressure are not equally distributed, and there are some disparities that the PWH/PrEP ratio could measure.