

# NUMBERS and VOICES

## A Profile of PrEP among Latino MSM in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County Commission on HIV September 13, 2018

**Ronald Brooks, PhD**  
Assistant Professor  
UCLA Department of Family  
Medicine  
Director of Research and  
Evaluation, Bienestar Human  
Service, Inc.

**Omar Nieto**  
Project Director  
LA PrEP Stories Project  
UCLA Department of Family  
Medicine

**Amanda Landrian Gonzalez, MPH**  
Research Intern, Bienestar Human  
Services, Inc.  
Doctoral Student, UCLA Fielding  
School of Public Health



# Two Stories of PrEP among Latino MSM in LAC

## NUMBERS

Findings from a sub-study done with Latino MSM non-PrEP users who were participants in “**Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete**,” a study that assessed the use of gay-oriented social/sexual networking apps to identify and link Latino MSM to HIV testing, prevention and medical services

## VOICES

Findings from qualitative interviews done with Latino MSM PrEP users who were part of the “**LA PrEP Stories**” project. This study is examining the lived experiences of PrEP users.



# Presentation Outline

**Overview of HIV infections among Latino MSM and an overview of PrEP and PrEP adoption among Latino MSM**

## **NUMBERS (“Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete”)**

- Study objective
- Demographic characteristics of study population
- PrEP awareness, accessibility, acceptability and current use
- Summary

## **VOICES (LA PrEP Stories Project)**

- Study objective
- Demographic characteristics of study population
- Experiences and perceptions of Latino MSM PrEP users
- Summary

**Conclusions and recommendations to facilitate PrEP adoption among Latino MSM**



# Overview of HIV Infections among Latino MSM

- In the U.S., Latino MSM are disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic.
- The lifetime HIV risk is 1 in 4 for Latino MSM compared with a lifetime HIV risk of 1 in 11 for white MSM.
- While HIV incidence among MSM overall saw a period of stabilization from 2011-2015, new diagnoses among Latinos increased by 14%.
- In Los Angeles County, Latino MSM account for the largest percentage (47%) of new HIV diagnoses among MSM of all racial/ethnic groups.

Let's talk about

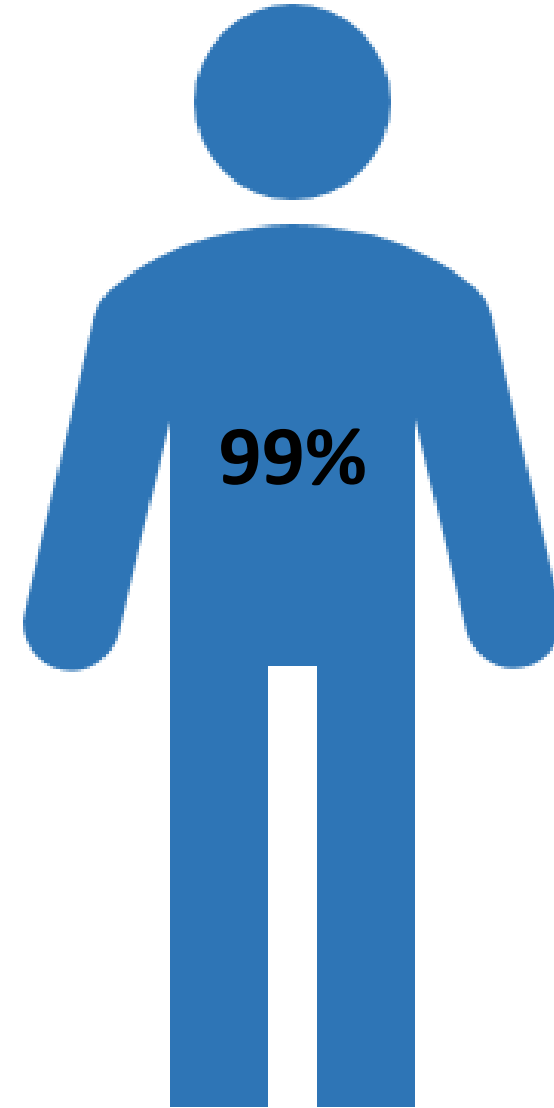


# PrEP Effectiveness

---

TDF/FTC (7x/week)

Anderson P et al, Sci Transl Med. 2012



# Overview of PrEP and PrEP Adoption among Latino MSM

- In 2012, Truvada® was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as PrEP to prevent HIV infection
- In 2014, the CDC established clinical guidelines for administering PrEP to high-risk individuals.
- While evidence suggests that PrEP use is rising in the U.S., disparities persist in uptake among Latinos and African Americans.
- Nationally, in 2015, approximately 300,000 Latinos could have potentially benefited from PrEP, but only 7,600 (2.5%) of prescriptions were filled by Latinos.

# Overview of PrEP and PrEP Adoption among Latino MSM

- Other research has specifically shown low uptake of PrEP among Latino MSM
  - In San Francisco, PrEP uptake among white MSM was 22.9% compared with only 4.3% among Latino MSM (Snowden et al., 2016)
  - In California, PrEP use was reported by 13.9% of white MSM vs. 6.5% for Latino MSM (Holloway et al., 2017)
- The low uptake of PrEP among Latino MSM will contribute to the persistent HIV disparity that exists in this population.



# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Study Objectives

- Evaluate the awareness, accessibility, acceptability and use of PrEP among both English- and Spanish-speaking Latino MSM.
- Examine predictors of PrEP awareness, accessibility, and acceptability among Latino MSM not currently using PrEP.



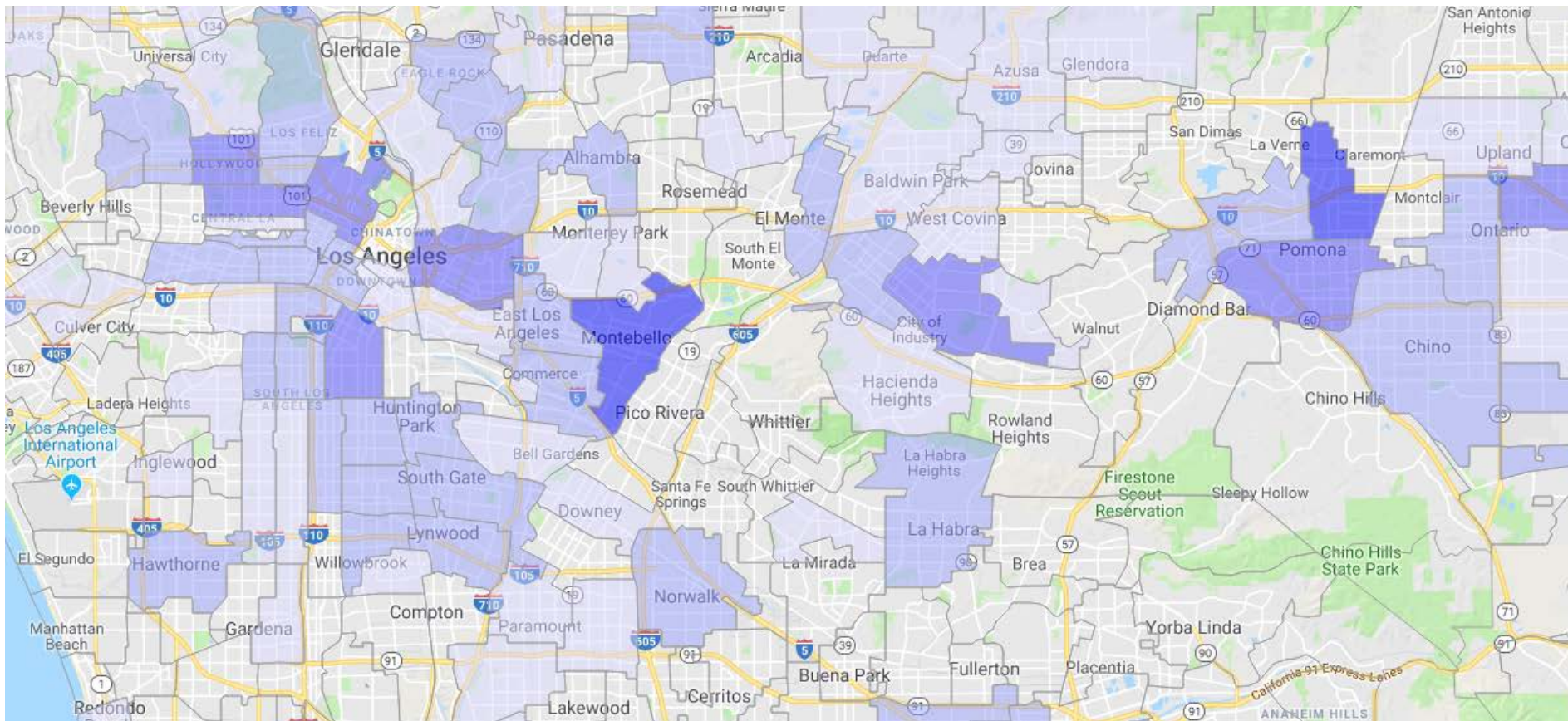
# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Study Population and Design

- In Project Protect Yourself, Latino MSM were recruited through gay-oriented social/sexual networking applications (apps) between December 2015 and April 2017.
- Completed a brief survey in English or Spanish.
  - Collected information on demographics, substance use, sexual behaviors, and PrEP awareness, accessibility, acceptability and use.
- A subset of 276 Latino MSM who tested negative for HIV and answered PrEP-related survey questions

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

- Geographical location of study population



Number of participants

1

2-4

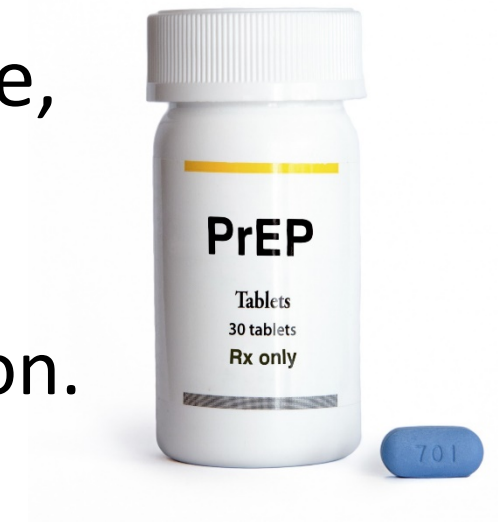
5-9

10+

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Demographic characteristics of PrEP users

- Of the 276 Latino MSM included in the sample, **only 16 (6%) reported currently using PrEP.**
  - Current PrEP-users were generally younger in age and had more than a high school education.
  - **All were English speakers** and 2 were undocumented.



# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Demographic characteristics of non-PrEP users (N=260)

Characteristic	n	%
Age (years)		
18-25	76	29%
26-35	104	40%
36-45	56	22%
46+	24	9%
Spanish language	36	14%
Undocumented status	25	10%

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Demographic characteristics (continued; N=260)

Characteristic	n	%
Country of Birth		
United States	183	71%
Mexico	52	20%
El Salvador	11	4%
Other Latin American country	13	5%

Among those not born in the US (n=76), the mean age of arrival in the US was 17 years and ranged from 1 year to 46 years

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Demographic characteristics (continued; N=260)

Characteristic	n	%
Highest level of education		
High school/GED or less	82	32%
Associate/technical degree or some college	122	47%
Bachelor's degree or higher	56	22%
Employed (FT/PT)	194	75%
Annual income (US dollars) of 30,000 or less	188	72%

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

Substance use and sexual behaviors (in the past 12 months) of non-PrEP users (N=260)

Characteristic	n	%
Used methamphetamines	32	12
Used cocaine	35	13
Six or more sexual partners	135	52
Had anal sex with a male partner without a condom	194	75
Had anal sex with a male partner while under the influence of alcohol	130	50



# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## PrEP awareness, accessibility, and acceptability of non-PrEP users

Characteristic	n	%
<b>PrEP Awareness</b>	N=260	
Ever heard of PrEP	222	85%
<b>PrEP Accessibility and Acceptability<sup>1</sup></b>	N=222	
Know how to access PrEP	77	35%
Likely to take PrEP in the future	157	71%

<sup>1</sup>Among those who reported to have ever heard of PrEP (n=222)

# Multiple Variable Analysis Results

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Predictors of PrEP awareness

### **LOWER education associated with LOWER awareness**

- Those with a high school degree or less were **20x less likely** to be aware of PrEP than those with a college degree or higher (aOR=.05,  $p<.01$ ).

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Predictors of PrEP awareness (continued)

### **HIGHER number of sexual partners associated with HIGHER awareness**

- Those with 6-10 sexual partners were **5x more likely** to be aware of PrEP than those with 0-1 sexual partner (aOR=5.1,  $p<.05$ ).
- Those with more than 10 sexual partners were **6x more likely** to be aware of PrEP than those with 0-1 sexual partner (aOR=6.2,  $p<.05$ ).

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

Predictors of PrEP accessibility (among those who were aware of PrEP; n=222)

## **LOWER education associated with LOWER accessibility**

- Those with a high school education or less were 2.5x less likely to know how to access PrEP than those with a college degree or higher (aOR=.40,  $p<.05$ ).

## **Undocumented status associated with LOWER accessibility**

- Those with undocumented status were 5x less likely to know how to access PrEP than US citizens/legal residents (aOR=.19,  $p<.05$ ).

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

Predictors of PrEP acceptability (among those who were aware of PrEP; n=222)

**LOWER education associated with HIGHER acceptability**

- Those with a high school education or less were **3x more likely** to report acceptability of PrEP than those with a college degree or higher (aOR=3.4,  $p<.05$ ).

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

Predictors of PrEP acceptability (among those who were aware of PrEP; n=222)

## **HIGHER number of sexual partners associated with HIGHER acceptability**

- Those with 6-10 sexual partners were nearly 8x more likely to report acceptability of PrEP than those with 0-1 sexual partner (aOR=7.9,  $p<.05$ ).
- Those with more than 10 sexual partners were 10x more likely to report acceptability than those with 0-1 sexual partner (aOR, 10.2,  $p<.01$ ).

# Project Protect Yourself/Proyecto Protégete

## Conclusions and Limitations

- High awareness and several notable high risk behaviors reported, but very few men in our sample reported current PrEP use.
- Latino MSM with lower educational attainment are more likely to report high acceptability of PrEP, but are less likely to be aware of or know how to access PrEP.
- Need to improve PrEP accessibility among undocumented Latino MSM.
- Recruitment was limited to social and sexual networking apps, so our findings may not be generalizable to Latino MSM who do not use these apps or who use them infrequently.





**L A**

**PrEP**  
**STORIES**  
**RESEARCH**  
**STUDY**

# LA PrEP Stories Project



## Study Objective

- The objective of the study is to explore the experiences of Latino MSM PrEP users to help facilitate PrEP uptake in this population.

# LA PrEP Stories Project



## Study Population and Design

- Between January 2017 and October 2017, a purposive sample of Latino MSM PrEP users was recruited through gay-oriented sexual and social networking apps (i.e. Grindr and Growlr), community events, and community agency referrals.
- A total of 29 Latino MSM PrEP users completed an in-depth, semi-structured interview.
- Participants completed an audio computer assisted self-survey (ACASI) to provide information on demographic and PrEP use characteristics.
- Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data.

# LA PrEP Stories Project



## Demographic characteristics (N=29)

Characteristic	n	(%)
Age (years); mean (range)	30 (21-49)	
Sexual orientation: Gay/homosexual	25	86%
Highest level of education completed		
High school/GED	3	10%
Some college	13	45%
College degree or higher	9	44%

# LA PrEP Stories Project



## Demographic and PrEP use characteristics (continued; N=29)

Characteristic	n	(%)
Have health insurance	27	93%
Employed (FT/PT)	23	79%
Annual income of \$40,000 or less	23	79%
Length of time using PrEP (months); mean (median, range)	17 (12, 0.25-68)	

What was the main reason you  
decided to start PrEP?

# LA PrEP Stories Project:

## Main reason for starting PrEP



**Personal assessment of high risk sexual behaviors (e.g., prefers condomless sex, has multiple partners, open relationship, prior STI)**

**Serodiscordant relationship, HIV+ partners**

**Motivation from peers and/or sex partners**

What challenges did you  
experience in being able to access  
PrEP?



# LA PrEP Stories Project: Challenges accessing PrEP



## **Primary care physicians who lack PrEP and/or LGBT competency**

- Having to locate other providers capable of prescribing PrEP
- Switching health insurance over to new medical facility

What are some barriers that may  
prevent Latino MSM from using  
PrEP?

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Barriers



## **Structural and logistical barriers to access**

- Lack of insurance
- Transportation to the location of PrEP services
- Time conflicts with work

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Barriers cont'd



## **Structural and logistical barriers to access (continued)**

- “One, the language barrier. There’s not that many people who are able to talk about PrEP in Spanish, specifically in clinic settings... and the awareness: if there are programs to help them, they’re not aware of them and they’re too scared to even ask because they’re more worried about getting deported than trying to access this pill.” (age 26, 16 months on PrEP)

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Barriers cont'd



## **Lack of PrEP access and exposure in communities of color**

- “It needs not to be a white social construct in the gay community... the access needs to be given more because if not, then you’re going to have a gay white community that’s going to lower its HIV rate, but why is it that the Black gays and the Latino gays, their HIV goes up when the same pill’s available to all but it’s not accessible to all?” (age 30, 9 months on PrEP)

## **Lack of engagement with healthcare system**

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Barriers cont'd



## **Lack of PrEP and/or LGBT competent medical providers**

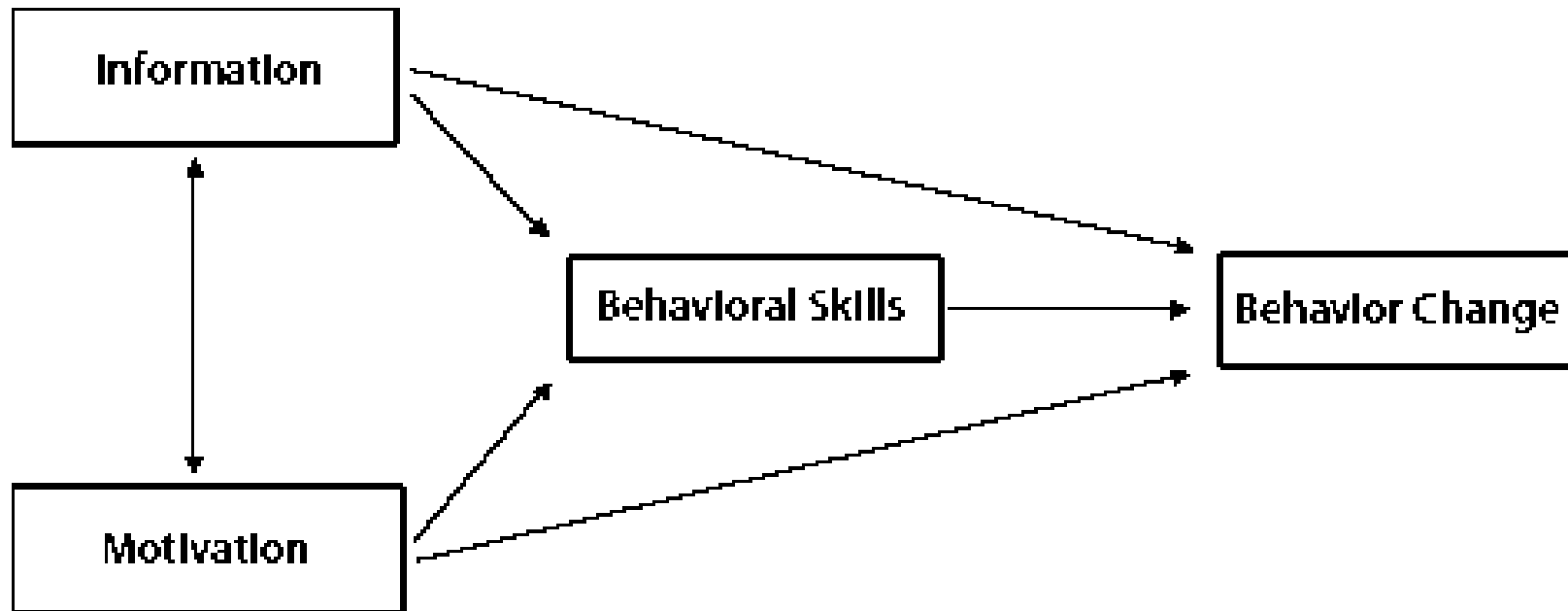
- “I would say doctors and nurses should know about [PrEP]... but there’s still instances where a lot of providers don’t have the information, resources, knowledge, or even as a referral of where to go.” (age 30, 24 months on PrEP)
- “I’ve had doctors who have sort of come off condescending about the kind of sex that I have engaged in. It makes me want to be less communicative with them... so I think they need to be trained on communicating or even just being more tolerant or open-minded about things.” (age 24, 26.5 months on PrEP)

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Barriers cont'd



## Stigma

- PrEP Stigma: “The stigma of people kind of pinning you as this sexual deviant because you’re on PrEP.” (age 26, 16 months on PrEP)
- HIV Stigma: “I would say the stigma of HIV in general... it’s just the very fact that it’s related to HIV.” (age 24, 4 months on PrEP)
- Gay Male Stigma: “For a lot of Latinos, you don’t come out. Why are you going to seek something that’s gay-oriented? They’re not because of the stigma growing up. ‘I’m not gay. Therefore, even though I have sex with men, I’m not gay so why do I need a gay pill?’” (age 30, 9 months on PrEP)



Information-Motivation-Behavioral Skills  
Model

(Fisher & Fisher, 1992)



What type of information do  
Latino MSM need to know about  
PrEP to decide if it's right for  
them?

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Information needed



- PrEP is **effective** at preventing HIV infection (best with other prevention methods)
- PrEP is **affordable** and accessible (assistance programs available)
- PrEP is **easy to use** (adherence is important)

What would motivate Latino MSM  
to use PrEP?

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Motivators



## **Testimonials from other Latino MSM PrEP users**

- “Letting [Latino MSM] know that somebody that looks like them or has a similar story to them was able to access this and gain something from it.” (age 26, 16 months on PrEP)
- “Having other brown men tell other men about it. I am more prone to taking something if there’s someone who looks like me tells me about it.” (age 24, 8 months on PrEP)

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Motivators cont'd



## Knowing that PrEP can reduce stress and anxiety associated with sex

- “I think PrEP is very empowering... And I would use that to be my message to other guys. Like, you can say fuck it and take the pill and be like, I like to fuck and I don’t want to worry about HIV. And being engaged in health care is going to keep me healthy.”  
(age 32, 42 months on PrEP)

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Motivators cont'd



## Other factors:

- Knowing that PrEP is effective in preventing HIV
- Knowing the facts about HIV rates among Latino MSM
- Increased marketing specifically to Latino MSM using a variety of modalities
  - Social media
  - Tailored and language-specific pamphlets and brochures
  - Buy-in from opinion leaders

What skills do Latino MSM need  
in order to be able to access and  
remain on PrEP?

# LA PrEP Stories Project: Skills needed



## **Patient-provider communication skills (self-efficacy and honesty talking about sexual behaviors with medical providers)**

- “It’s owning and accepting your truth. So a person be like, I’m going to go to this doctor and I don’t need to lie. I’m a gay man and I have a right to be treated as such and to stay healthy this way, and I need you to use your tools to keep me healthy.” (age 32, 42 months on PrEP)



# LA PrEP Stories Project: Skills needed cont'd



## **PrEP disclosure skills (decision-making around disclosure, framing the conversation)**

- “I was very careful when telling my mom because I wanted her to know because I think that it’s ultimately something that is going to give her peace of mind... so I had to very much frame it like, ‘This is my second line of protection in the same way that a girl could use birth control and still use condoms.’” (age 21, 33 months on PrEP)

## **Adherence skills (e.g., pill box, phone reminders, tracking adherence with a calendar)**

# LA PrEP Stories Project



## Conclusion and Limitations

- Our qualitative interviews with Latino MSM highlighted several ways to promote and facilitate PrEP uptake among other Latino MSM
- All interviews were conducted in English
  - A gap remains in research with monolingual Spanish-speaking Latino MSM who are using PrEP
- May not be generalizable to Latinos in other settings

# Conclusions and Recommendations for Optimizing PrEP Uptake among Latino MSM

# Conclusions

## POSITIVE TRENDS IDENTIFIED

- PrEP awareness is high among Latino MSM
- PrEP acceptability is high among Latino MSM
- Latino MSM PrEP users feel positive about their PrEP use

# Conclusions (cont'd)

## ISSUES REMAINING

- PrEP uptake remains low among Latino MSM
- PrEP accessibility is low among Latino MSM
- PrEP, Gay and HIV stigma persist
- Information is needed on PrEP-related issues among monolingual Spanish Speaking Latino MSM
- Marketing PrEP to Latinos with lower levels of education is needed
- Monitoring adherence, persistent use, and discontinuation of PrEP is needed

# Recommendations for Optimizing PrEP Uptake among Latino MSM

- Increasing knowledge of how to access PrEP is not enough if Latino MSM face barriers to PrEP uptake and persistence from providers
- There is a need to increase PrEP literacy among primary care physicians to include:
  - General knowledge of PrEP
  - Information about who is eligible for PrEP
  - Knowledge of external PrEP resources and programs
- Providers should be able to:
  - Conduct sexual histories
  - Provide services that are culturally appropriate and language-specific

# Recommendations for Optimizing PrEP Uptake among Latino MSM (cont'd)

- Based on Transtheoretical Model (Stage of Change) below, we need to move Latino MSM through the stages from PrEP pre-contemplation to PrEP action and maintenance.



- The information, motivation, and behavioral skills (IMB) framework can be used to create a brief intervention to move Latino MSM through the stages to uptake and retention to PrEP

# Recommendations for Optimizing PrEP Uptake among Latino MSM (cont'd)

- An IMB intervention can address low accessibility with information and behavioral skills needed to access PrEP
- The intervention can address the disconnect between high awareness and acceptability and low uptake with information and motivators to use PrEP
  - Personal testimonials: Latino MSM want to hear about PrEP from others that look like them
  - Helping Latino MSM identify intra- and interpersonal motivators to remain HIV-negative.
  - Improving PrEP literacy among Latino MSM in a manner that is tailored to the population and language-specific. PrEP awareness does NOT equal comprehension/understanding



# Recommendations for Optimizing PrEP Uptake among Latino MSM (cont'd)

- The multiple forms of stigma (PrEP, HIV, Gay) that persist in Latino communities must be addressed to help facilitate PrEP uptake and continued use among Latino MSM
  - Mass media campaigns/community-level intervention
  - Interventions for specific target populations

# Thank You!

## Acknowledgements

- These research projects were supported by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program of the University of California Office of the President (TL13-BHS-584: Co P.I.s Dr. Frank Galvan and Dr. Ron Brooks), by the National Institute of Mental Health under Grant R21MH107339, and by the Center for HIV Identification, Prevention, and Treatment (CHIPTS) under Grant MH58107.
- The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIH or CHRP.
- We also wish to thank the participants who graciously provided a wealth of insight and information for these two studies.
- We also want to thank the staff that worked on these two studies: Jesus Duran, Edgar Camacho, Hugo Aguilar, Ying-Tung Chen, M.S., and Gabriela Lazalde.