

Optimizing care for people at risk of acquiring HIV: health care providers' perspective of an online PrEP consultation tool within the SwissPrEPared program

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Background:

The growing demand for oral HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a challenge for health care providers (HCPs). In April 2019, SwissPrEPared, a nation-wide program in Switzerland, began with the goal of optimizing care for people requesting PrEP. The program includes a consultation tool that both supports HCPs and standardizes care during PrEP consultations. Seven days prior to their consultation, participants receive a link to an anonymous online questionnaire via text message/email that addresses adherence, side effects, co-medications, sexual wellbeing and mental health. Upon questionnaire completion, their HCP receives a summary of the answers to guide the consultation.

Methods:

In December 2019 we conducted an anonymous survey among 62 HCPs working with SwissPrEPared in eleven institutions in order to evaluate the perceived helpfulness of the tool. The survey contained six multiple-choice and two five-point Likert scale questions.

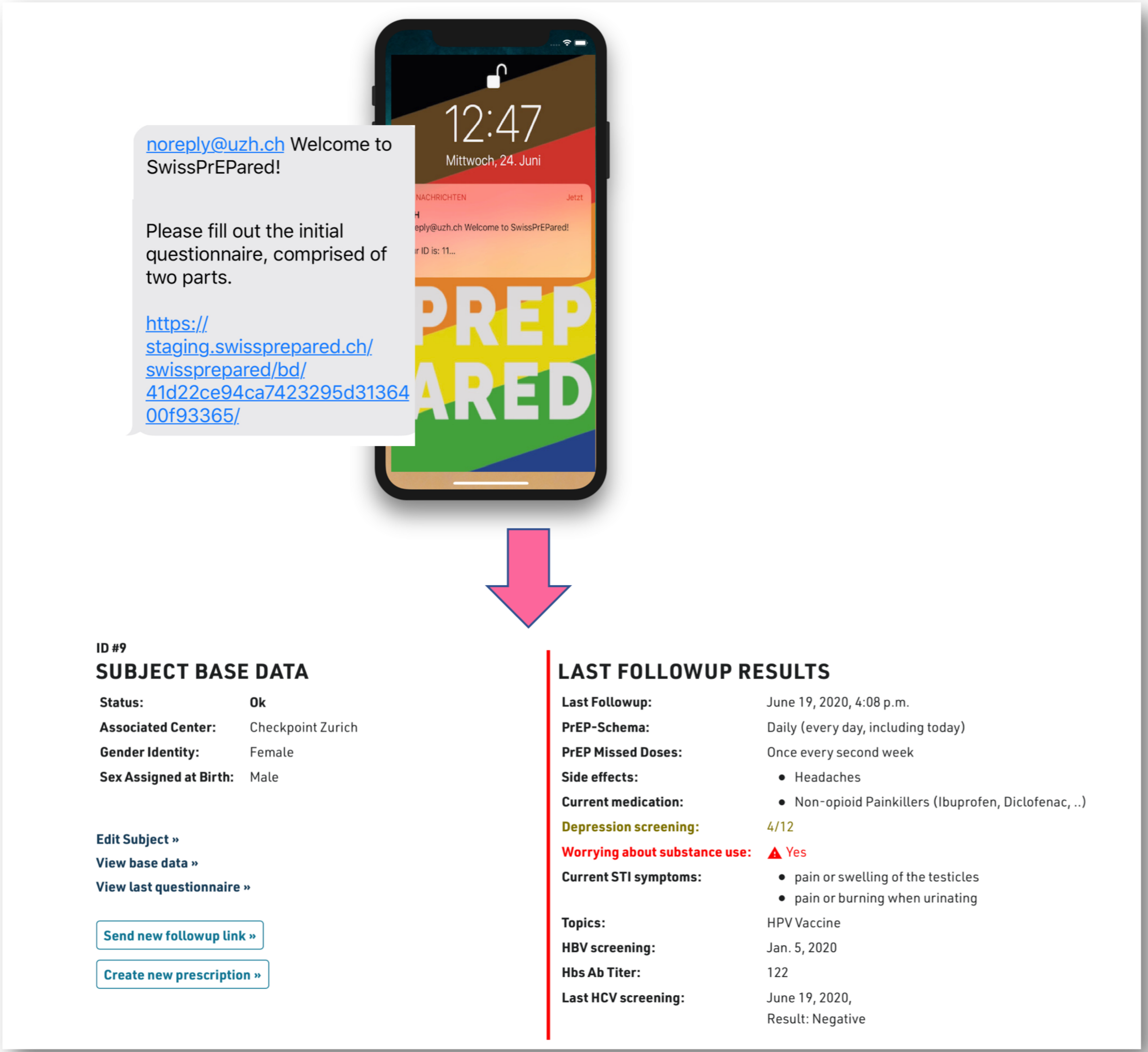


Image1: web-based consultation tool

Results:

The tool was used for 1'377 PrEP consultations. Twenty-nine of the 62 HCPs (46%) answered at least one survey question. Three HCPs who reported that they had not yet used the tool were excluded from further analysis. Amongst all survey respondents, overall helpfulness was rated as a 3.8/5; user-friendliness as a 3.7/5 overall, and 4.4/5 among HCPs who had used the tool in >11 consultations. Nineteen of 26 HCPs (73%) reported that the tool helped them detect health issues in their PrEP users that they would have otherwise discovered too late or even missed. The most frequently detected health issues were problematic substance use (14/26) and depression (13/26). Other reported benefits of the tool were: a better overview on important topics (14/26); not forgetting (15/26) or addressing important/uncomfortable topics (12/26); and saving time (7/26).

Question	Answers	Results
Which occupational category do you belong to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical doctor/physician: Nurse: Other 	17/29 11/29 1/29
How many PrEP consultations have you approximately conducted with the SwissPrEPared tool ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None yet 1-10: 11-30: 31-100: >101: 	3/29 10/29 6/29 9/29 1/29
How helpful is the SwissPrEPared online tool for your counseling in general? (1 point: not helpful, 5 point: very helpful)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 point 2 point 3 point 4 point 5 point Missing answer Mean 	0/26 1/26 7/26 13/26 4/26 1/26 3.8
With the help of the online tool/questionnaire, were you able to detect a particular health risk which otherwise you think you might have discovered too late or even missed? (you can choose more than one answer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, Family history of osteoporosis Yes, depression Yes, problematic substance use Yes, side effects of PrEP Yes, adherence problems Yes, lack of vaccination Yes, other (freetext) No, the tool has not yet helped me to discover a particular health risk more quickly 	6/26 13/26 14/26 7/26 7/26 3/26 1/26 7/26
Have you already been able to discuss a positive depression screening with your client?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, I have not yet had any clients with a positive depression screening. No, because it didn't fit into the PrEP consultation No, because I didn't know how to speak with the client about it Yes, a few Yes, half/half Yes, almost always Missing answer 	11/26 1/26 0/26 6/26 0/26 7/26 1/26
How user-friendly do you rate the SwissPrEPared tool? (1 point: not user-friendly, 5 point: very user-friendly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 point 2 point 3 point 4 point 5 point Mean Mean, when >11 consultations 	1/26 4/26 5/26 9/26 7/26 3.7 4.4
Do you know the SwissPrEPared recommendations for PrEP prescribers and do you use them in your clinical routine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, I know them and I use them Yes, I know them, but I don't use them No, I don't know them Missing answer 	18/26 2/26 5/26 1/26
What was in particular helpful for you, when using the SwissPrEPared tool? (you can choose more than one answer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It helps me not to forget important points of the consultation It saves time It helps to speak about uncomfortable topics (sexual behavior, substance use, mental health) It helps to keep an overview about the important topics Other points where the tool was helpful in your clinical routine Missing answer 	15/26 7/26 12/26 14/26 2/26 1/26

Table 1: results of the online health care professionals survey

Conclusion:

Most HCPs who used the tool in SwissPrEPared perceived it as being helpful. It seemed particularly useful in detecting health issues, such as depression and problematic substance use. Both are important health topics among people at risk of acquiring HIV. As a next step the tool will be evaluated by less PrEP-experienced HCPs.

