

## Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Continuum in a Community Health Center: a Community-academic-healthcare Partnership

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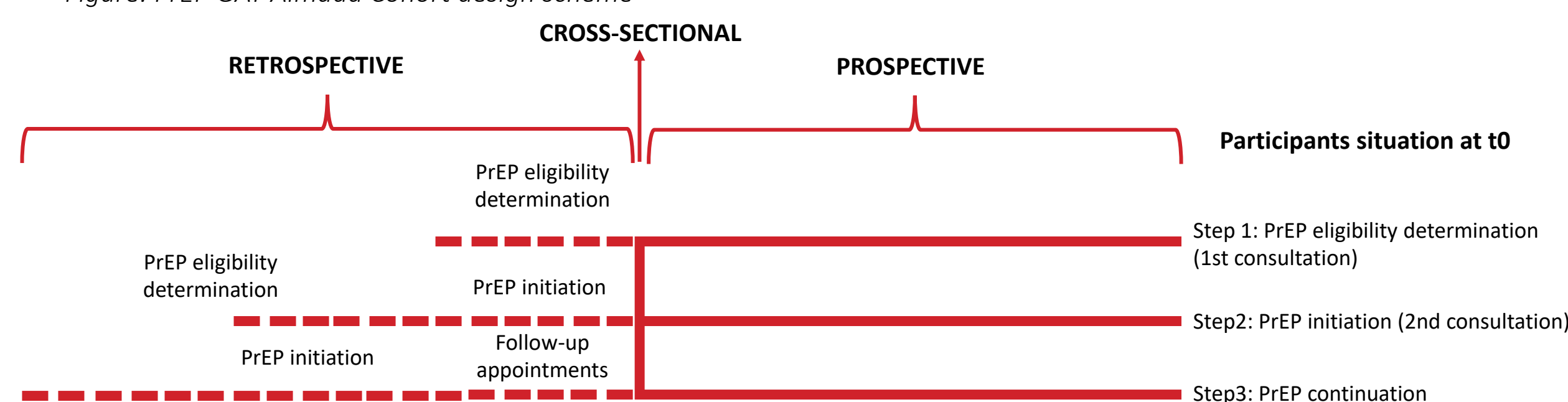
### BACKGROUND

Collaboration between communities, academia, and healthcare is crucial in addressing the HIV epidemic. This study presents preliminary findings on the continuum of care for HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) at a community-based center in Almada, Portugal, through a partnership involving the Institute of Public Health of the University of Porto (ISPUP), Hospital Garcia de Orta, City Council of Almada, and the Portuguese Activist Group on Treatments (GAT), which operates within the Almada Fast Track Cities (FTC) Initiative.

### METHOD

An observational, prospective, multi-method study is being conducted at GATAlmada from December 2023 to December 2024, using the PrEP cascade framework from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to examine factors associated with retention in PrEP care. Quantitative data is collected through self-administered questionnaires at recruitment and after 6 months, and electronic health records. Qualitative data is obtained through interviews with PrEP users and providers. This summary outlines quantitative data collected from February to July 2024.

Figure: PrEP GAT Almada Cohort design scheme



### CONCLUSION

The preliminary results from the PrEP GAT Almada Study reveal a majority of adult cisgender men, with a high proportion of immigrants and high academic attainment among the population of PrEP candidates and beneficiaries at GAT Almada. While these demographics reflect current PrEP uptake patterns, the notable lack of diversity in gender identities, sexual orientations, and age groups suggests a need for targeted outreach to underrepresented populations. Additionally, the findings highlight specific areas for enhancing PrEP service delivery, including streamlining appointment processes and optimizing medication access. Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving PrEP accessibility and uptake, thereby supporting the Fast-Track Cities Initiative goals and progress towards UNAIDS 2030 targets.

### FUNDING

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### RESULTS

By July 4th, 81 participants were recruited: 42 pre-PrEP beneficiaries (individuals recruited during their first or second consultation) and 39 PrEP beneficiaries (participants recruited from the third consultation onwards). Of the total, 91.4% were cisgender men, 66.6% aged 25-39 and 56.3% held a university degree. Immigrants account for the majority of participants: while 40.7% were born in Portugal, other 47.9% were born in Brazil, and 12.4% in other countries. About 35.5% had a fixed sexual partner, 64.3% reported previous sexually transmitted infection diagnosis, and 43.9% used recreational drugs in sexual contexts in the past 90 days. Mean PrEP-related out-of-pocket expense was 9.9€ (SD 12.9). Among PrEP users, lower satisfaction levels were for scheduling of appointments (59.1% satisfied / very satisfied) and medication dispensing process (52.3%).

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of users based on phase characterization at recruitment

	Pre-PrEP beneficiaries N (%)	PrEP beneficiaries N (%)
	42 (100.0)	39 (100.0)
<b>Gender identity</b>		
Cis men	37 (88.1)	37 (94.9)
Cis women	3 (7.1)	1 (2.6)
Trans women	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)
Non binary	0 (0.0)	1 (2.6)
Missing	0	0
<b>Age group (years)</b>		
18-29	16 (38.2)	10 (25.6)
30-39	17 (40.4)	16 (41.0)
≥40	9 (21.4)	11 (33.4)
Missing	0	0
<b>Sexual orientation</b>		
Gay	29 (69.0)	35 (92.1)
Bisexual	7 (16.7)	2 (5.3)
Heterosexual	4 (9.5)	1 (2.6)
Any other term	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)
Missing	0	1
<b>Country of birth</b>		
Brazil	21 (50.0)	17 (43.6)
Portugal	13 (31.0)	20 (51.3)
Argentina	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)
France	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)
Other	4 (9.5)	2 (5.1)
Missing	0	0
<b>Educational level</b>		
3rd cycle of basic education	3 (7.3)	1 (2.6)
Secondary education	11 (26.8)	12 (33.1)
Non-higher post-secondary education	6 (14.6)	3 (7.7)
Bachelor's or higher	20 (48.7)	25 (64.1)
Rather not answer	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)
Missing	1	0

Table 2: Level of satisfaction with PrEP access and services by users attending their second PrEP medical consultation and PrEP beneficiaries (N = 44)

Satisfaction with PrEP services(N = 44)	Satisfied / very satisfied N (%)
	44 (100.0)
Process of dispensing medication	23 (52.3)
Scheduling of appointments	26 (59.1)
Waiting time for the first appointment	28 (63.7)
Interest of healthcare professionals in your health status	41 (93.2)
Information provided by healthcare professionals about the medication and/or health status	42 (95.4)
Relationship with healthcare professionals	43 (97.7)