



SOUTHERN AFRICAN HIV CLINICIANS SOCIETY

# Considerations for PrEP Messaging and Promotion: A PrEP User's Perspective

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# Promotion vs. Messaging

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- **PrEP Promotion**
  - Focused on larger scale roll out
  - Not the focus of this presentation
- **PrEP Messaging**
  - Focused on the individual PrEP user
  - Aimed at clinical consultations
  - Can be translated for broader roll out



# Promoting PrEP

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- Demand creation and education is essential for broader PrEP roll out
- Messaging and outreach must be targeted to each audience/key population
- Considerations for Youth, MSM, Sex Workers, other key populations
  - Innovative technology
  - Community consultation and support
  - Peer-led and informed
  - Appropriately targeted marketing



## Considerations for PrEP Messaging:

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- What do we say about PrEP ?
- Who is our target audience?
- How do we frame PrEP?
- When do we talk about PrEP?



# A Starting Point

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The proposed messaging discussed in this presentation has been developed from almost 10 years experience working with PrEP users in the following contexts:

- Clinical Trial Participants
- PrEP Demonstration Projects
- Users in Private Practice
- Community Perspectives
- Personal Experience



# Presentation Outline:

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1. Why PrEP messaging is important
2. Understanding the PrEP User Perspective and Context
3. Key Messages



# The Importance of PrEP Messaging:

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- Large-scale PrEP access is limited
- This means you will be a significant source of PrEP information and access
- You will have the responsibility of clarifying misinformation and stigma
- Your messaging will be disseminated through larger community



# PrEP User Groups:

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PrEP users can be described across four specific groups defined by their level of risk, their level of exposure to PrEP, and their willingness/need to use PrEP

## **Group 1**

People who  
do not need  
PrEP

## **Group 2**

People who  
could benefit  
from PrEP

## **Group 3**

People who  
take PrEP but  
do not need it

## **Group 4**

People who  
need PrEP,  
want PrEP,  
and will take  
PrEP





# PrEP User Groups:

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- At first glance, the high risk group of PrEP users may seem the likely focus of PrEP messaging
- However, consider that these users mix with other groups in their social networks and communities

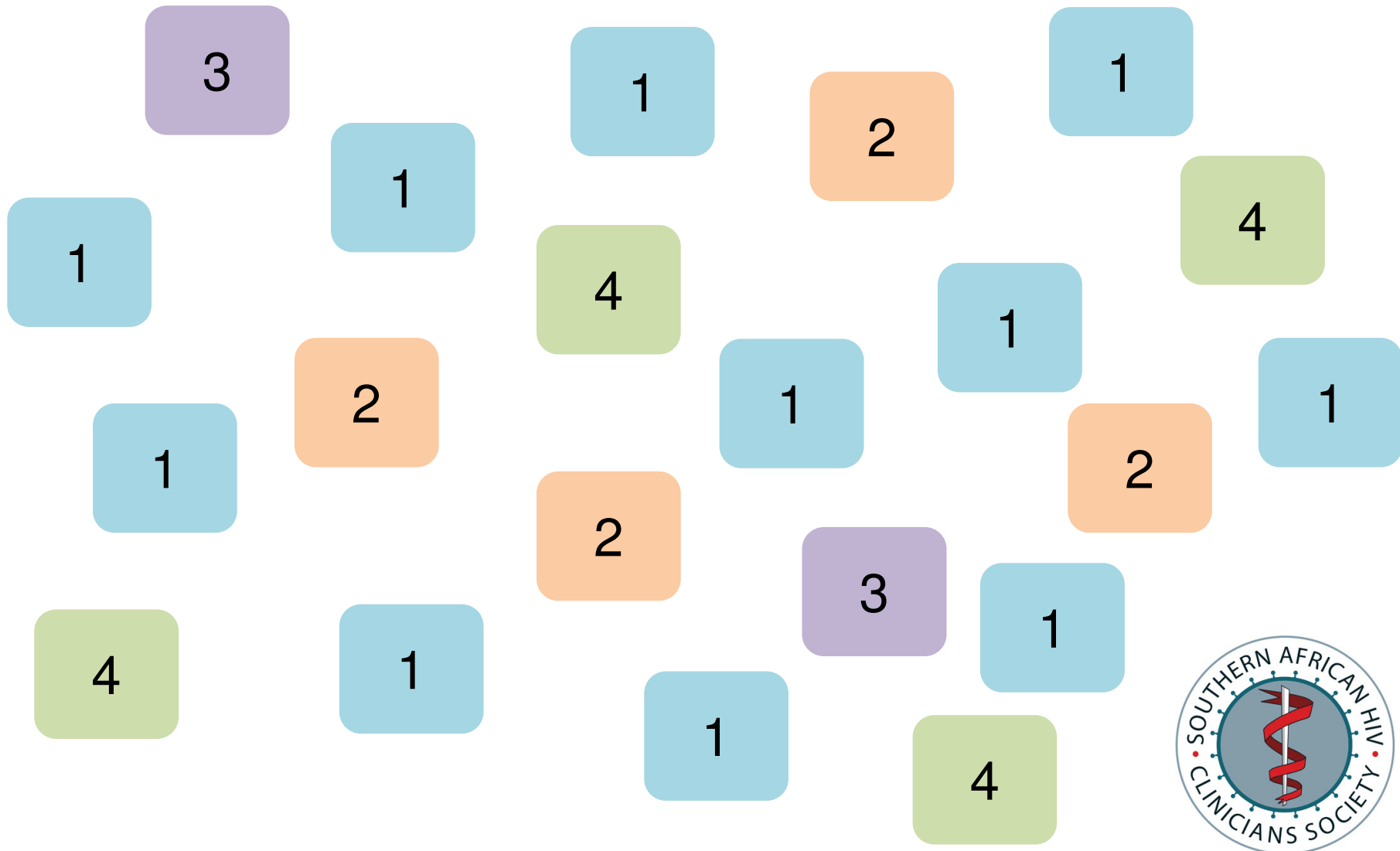
**Group 2**  
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# PrEP User Groups:

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# PrEP User Groups:

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Messages about PrEP that are solely focused on high risk behaviour will lead to a stigmatising environment

PrEP users may be seen as being linked to these high risk and stigmatising behaviours

## **Group 2**

People who could benefit from PrEP

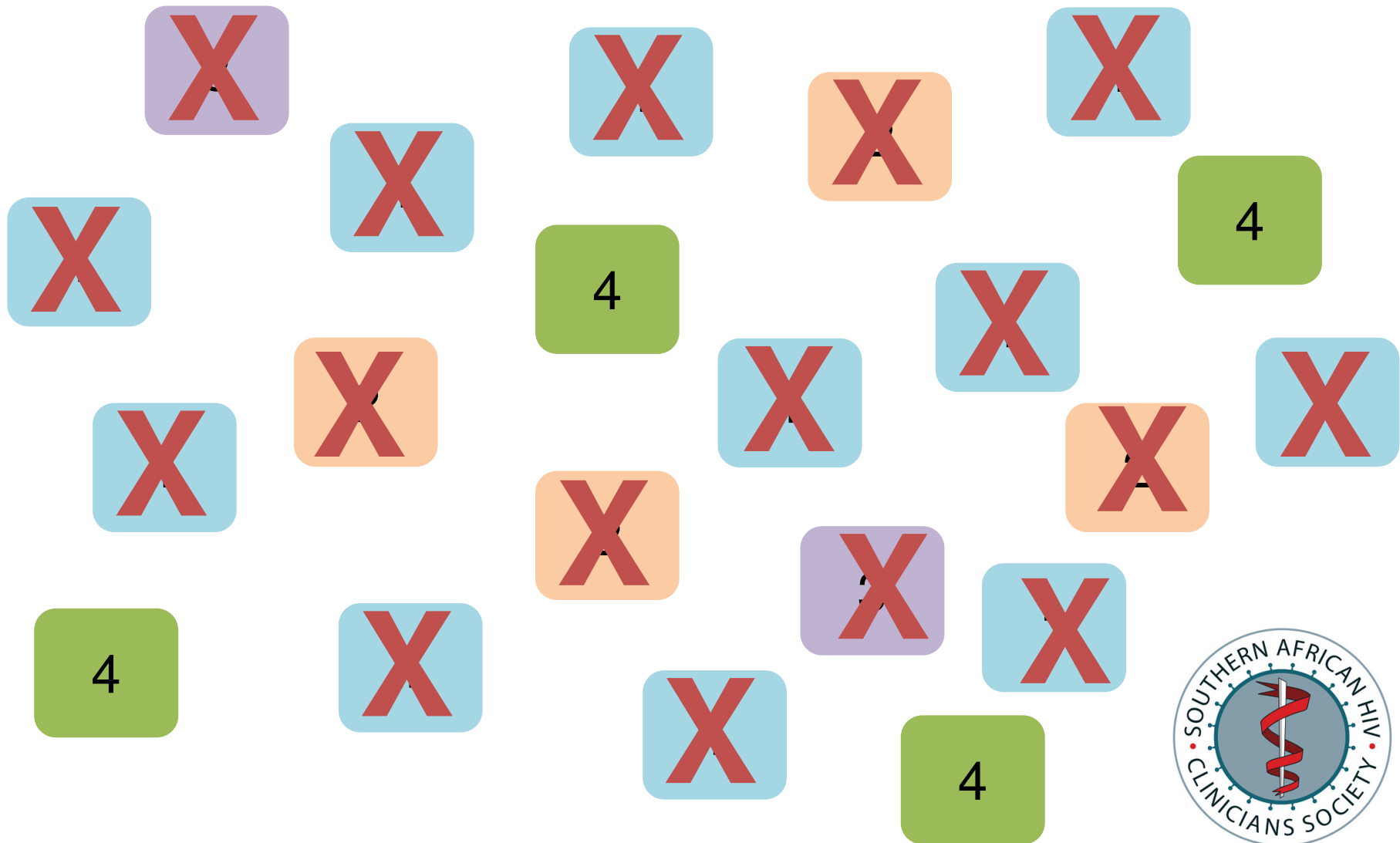
## **Group 4**

People who need PrEP, want PrEP, and will take PrEP



# PrEP User Groups:

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# PrEP User Groups:

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Likewise, if messaging about PrEP is strictly aimed at low risk populations, then high risk populations may not uptake the service

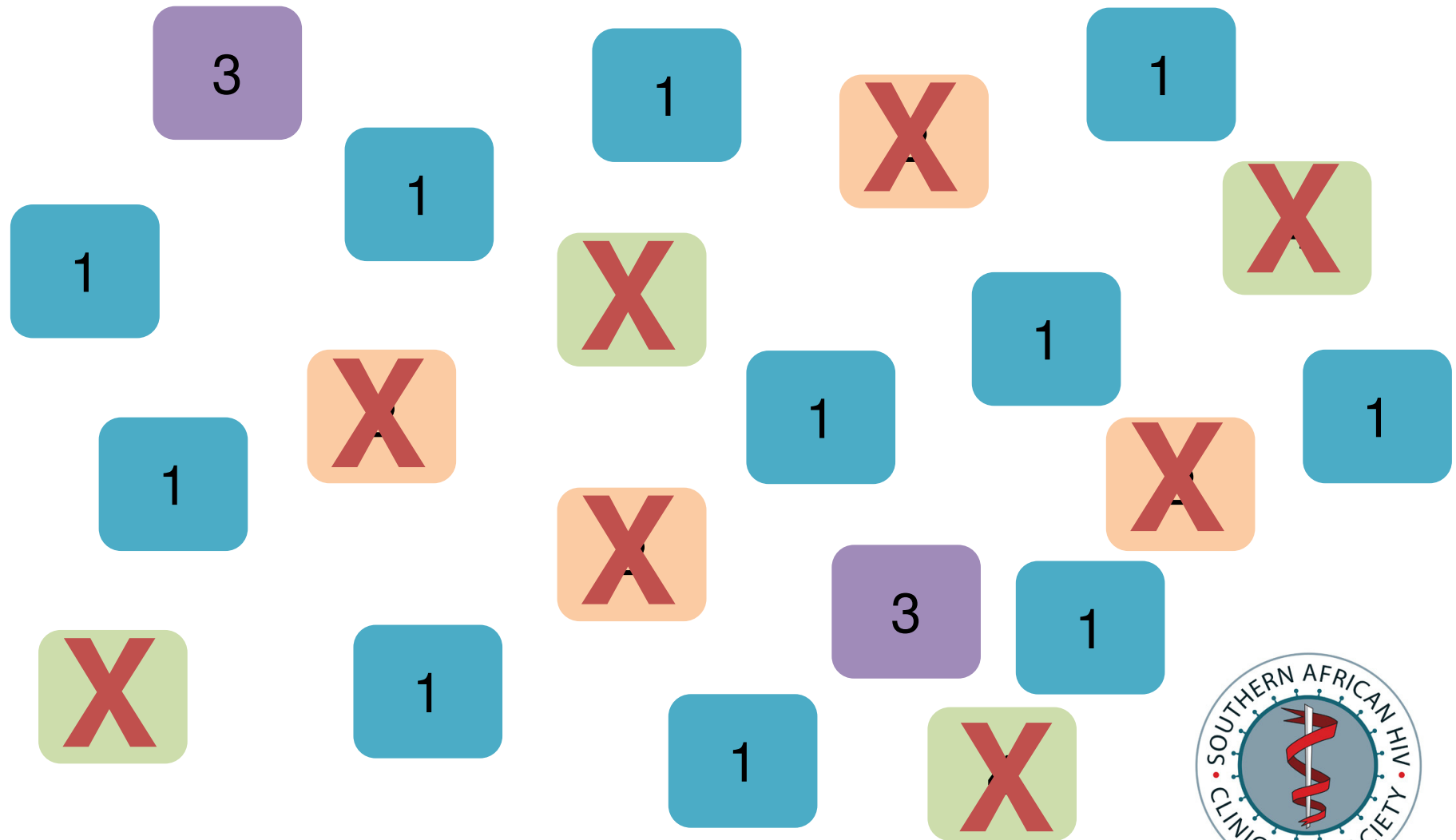
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# PrEP User Groups:

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# PrEP User Groups:

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PrEP messaging is therefore important as it will influence the broader conversation of PrEP and potentially affect its level of uptake among key populations

## **Group 1**

People who do not need PrEP

## **Group 2**

People who could benefit from PrEP

## **Group 3**

People who take PrEP but do not need it

## **Group 4**

People who need PrEP, want PrEP, and will take PrEP



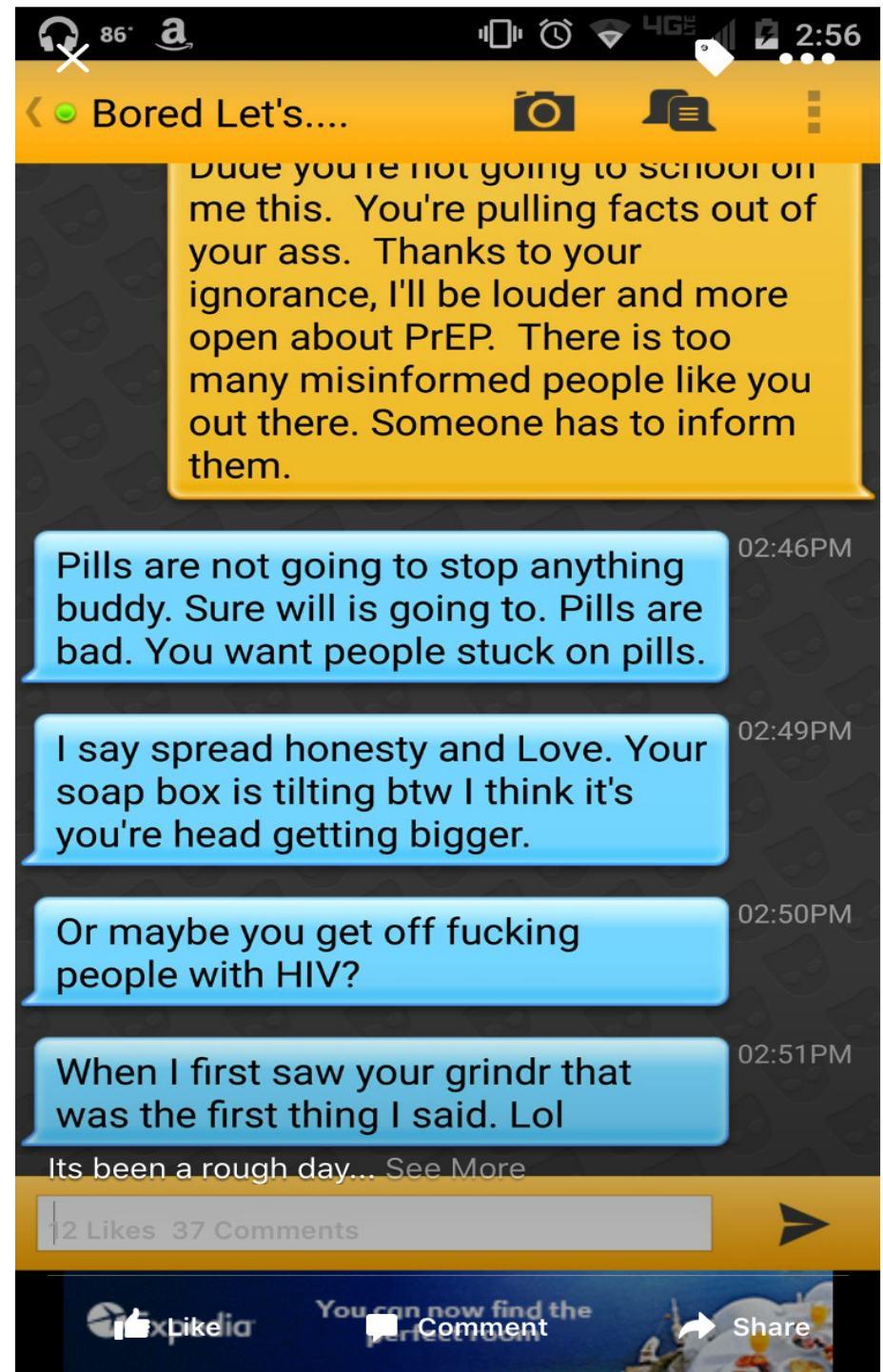
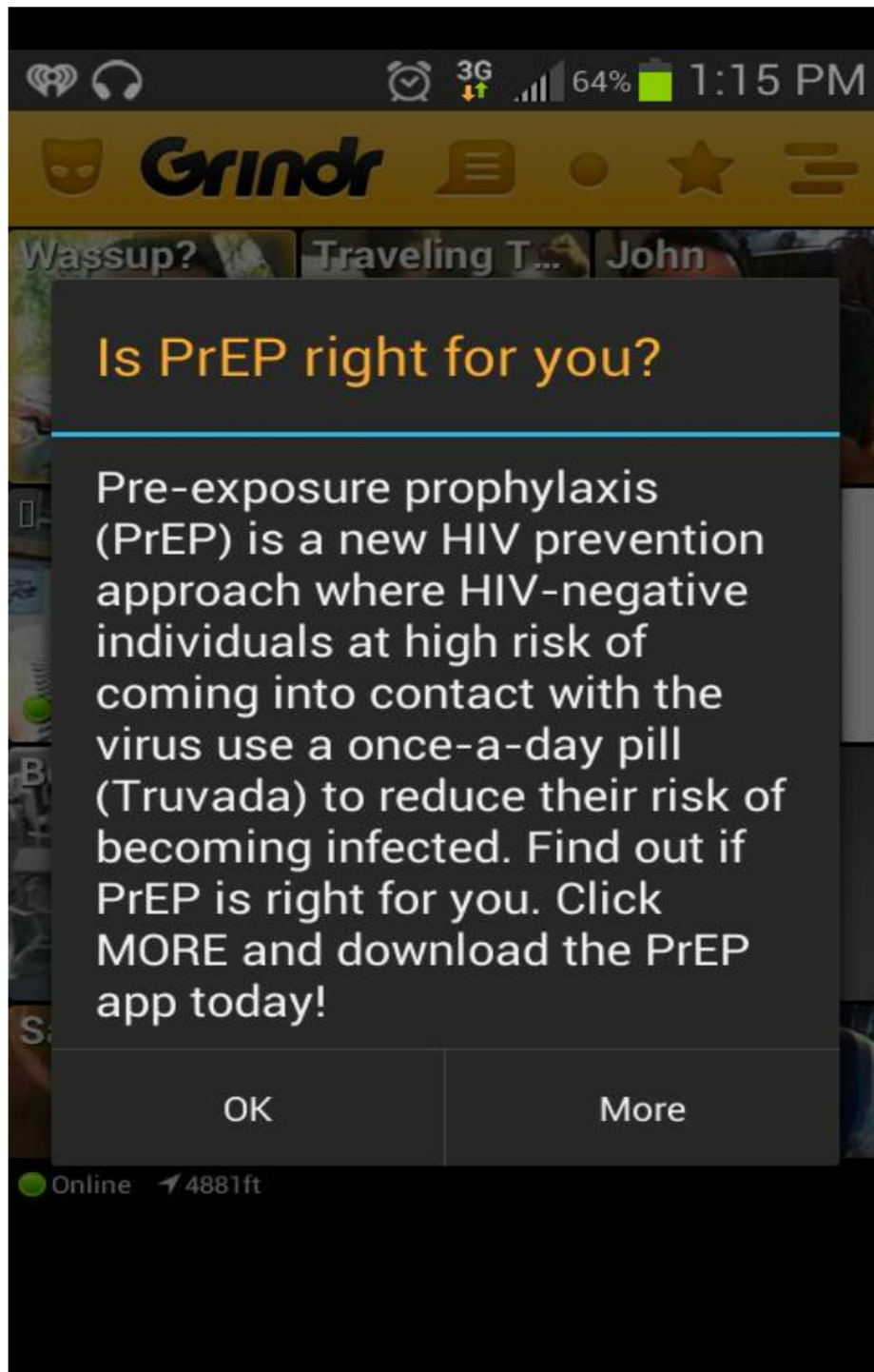
# The PrEP User Context:

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- **There is a broad PrEP conversation already happening about PrEP and a lot of misinformation out there**







# The PrEP User Context:

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- Informational conversations about PrEP are also occurring socially
- A recurring pattern has been identified regarding PrEP knowledge and attitudes among some MSM



# The PrEP User Context:

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1. What is PrEP?

## Education and Awareness

2. Wait, what you are saying?

3. Okay but what about the side effects?

## Safety

4. Shouldn't you be worried about resistance?

5. Do I have to stay on it forever?

6. So why do you take it?

## Impact on Personal Lifestyle

7. So can guys use PrEP and not use condoms?



# The PrEP User Context:

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- There is a broad PrEP conversation already happening and a lot of misinformation out there
- **PrEP users are diverse**







# The PrEP User Context:

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- There is a broad PrEP conversation already happening and a lot of misinformation out there
- PrEP users are diverse
- **Reasons for using PrEP vary widely and change over time**



“I started taking PrEP because when I first moved to Cape Town, I went out for drinks and this older guy picked me up. I don’t really remember what happened but I know that he had sex with me. When I asked him the next morning if he used a condom, he just said “nah bro, I’m clean”

“It was only after I broke up with him that I found out he had been f\*\*\*ing other people and not really using condoms. I mean, what was I supposed to do, who uses condoms in a 9 month relationship? That means you don't trust some one. I use PrEP because I don't want to have to rely on someone else's behaviour to stay negative”



“It didn’t scare me that she [my friend] got it [HIV]. What scared me was that she and I had been doing the same [sexual] stuff. So I guess I didn’t get it [HIV] because I’m lucky and I’d rather not rely on luck any more”

# The PrEP User Context:

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High Burden of Disease

Social Pressures and Norms

Partner and Contextual Risks



# The PrEP User Context:

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- Lots of misinformation out there
- PrEP users are diverse
- Reasons for using PrEP vary widely and change over time
- **PrEP is a dynamic strategy designed to address these contextual situations**



“He [The doctor] asked me why I can’t just use a condom! I mean, really? he just didn’t get it. I was so pissed off, he doesn’t walk in my shoes, you know? How can he tell me how I should protect myself?”

“It took me forever to find a doctor that got PrEP, that got me. She didn’t ask me to justify myself, she was just like ‘You need to do what works best for you’. After so long, that was so good to hear”

# Key Messages:

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Education and Awareness

Safety

Impact on Personal Lifestyle



# Key Messages & FAQ

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Per Guidelines, messaging can be focused during:

- **Screening**
  - *Provide education*
  - *Assess for Eligibility*
- **Initiation and follow up**
  - *Provide counselling, adherence*



# Key Messages & FAQ

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1. Providing PrEP education
2. Assessing for Eligibility
3. Counselling





# 1. Providing Educational Messages

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- “PrEP is a very strong medication with side effects, you should consider if those risks are worth it for you or not.”
- “Many studies have proven that PrEP is safe. There are predictable side effects for some people that go away in time. I will also run tests to make sure you are healthy before starting PrEP.”



# 1. Providing Educational Messages

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- “PrEP should only be used with condoms and lubricant and be part of HIV and STI testing.”
- “PrEP is an effective way to prevent HIV. It doesn't protect against other STIs so it works best when combined with condoms and testing.”



## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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**“At Significant risk”**



## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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- PrEP is a safe and highly effective medication that can prevent HIV. If you think that you might be exposed to HIV, then this is something you should consider.



## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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- **Scenario:** Someone comes into your clinic who is very low risk but they are increasingly worried about getting HIV and have no plans to increase their risk behaviour. How do you tell them that they are not eligible?



## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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- Sorry, you're not high risk enough for PrEP.
- Sorry, PrEP is only for people who are really risky, and you aren't high risk enough.



## 2. Eligibility Messaging

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- “It’s really great that you want to take care of your health.”
- “PrEP is a great way to prevent HIV but it isn’t for everyone.”
- “You’re doing a great job staying negative as it is.”
- “We can easily discuss PrEP anytime if you feel like your risk will increase in the future.”





### 3. Providing Counselling Messages

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- Develop messages that are consistent but that can be adapted for your patients
- For example condom use and PrEP



### 3. Providing Counselling Messages

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- **Scenario:** someone comes to your clinic and would like to start PrEP. They are already inconsistent with their condom use and plan to stop using them all together. For this patient, they are condom fatigued, they enjoy not using condoms, and they live in a cultural context that supports it.

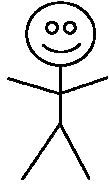


### 3. Providing Counselling Messages

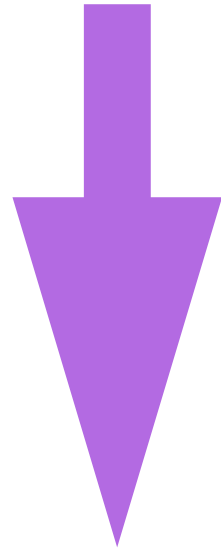
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- Condoms are the best way to stay HIV negative and protect yourself from STI. You should try to use condoms.
- I worry about giving you PrEP if it is going to make you have more unprotected sex.

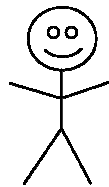




High risk for HIV



**“JUST USE A CONDOM”**  
**Is this Feasible?**



No Risk for HIV



### 3. Providing Counselling Messages

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- “PrEP is a really great way to prevent HIV. It doesn’t protect against other STIs, so if you aren’t using condoms then we need to regularly test you for other STIs. Taking PrEP every day is really important if you aren’t going to use condoms with it because if you don’t take it everyday, you will not be as protected and may become infected if you’re exposed. How do you feel about taking a pill every day [lead into effective use plan].”



### 3. Providing Counselling Messages

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- Some providers have been uncomfortable with this messaging and with this scenario.
- Chances of traditional messaging being effective are low. (i.e., Do you floss daily?)
- Will this eliminate his risk? NO
- Will this improve his risk? YES
- PrEP can help establish a longer term relationship with this user through which more challenging risks can be addressed over time.



# Summary Messages: Education and Awareness

- PrEP is a pill that you take everyday to stay HIV negative
- The use of PrEP is supported by South African medical experts, the South African government, and many international experts
- Before you start PrEP, you will meet with your healthcare provider to make sure PrEP is right for you
- PrEP does not require condoms to effectively prevent HIV but it does not protect against other STIs so using condoms and PrEP together will give you the best level of protection from both HIV and other STIs



# Summary Messages: Safety and Effectiveness

- PrEP has been proven to be safe and highly effective in preventing HIV.
- Many studies have proven that PrEP is safe. There are predictable side effects for some people that go away in time. I will also run tests to make sure you are healthy before starting PrEP.
- You need to take PrEP every day to get the best level of protection from it. If you do not take PrEP correctly, it will not protect you from HIV if you are exposed.





# Impact on Personal Lifestyle

- There are many different reasons for taking PrEP and your reasons for taking PrEP may change over time.
- If you start PrEP you do not have to take it for the rest of your life.
- You will need to learn to take a tablet every day.
- PrEP will help protect you from HIV even if you do not change your behaviour or your lifestyle.
- Using condoms and PrEP together will give you the most protection. If you are not using condoms then you should test for STIs more frequently.
- You will need to see your healthcare provider regularly.



# Some Final Considerations

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- Do you offer a safe environment for patients to discuss PrEP?
- Do you feel comfortable recommending PrEP as a primary HIV prevention strategy?
- Do you feel comfortable working with MSM, Sex Workers, and Young People?



# YOU are a communication tool!

- Remember the most important communication comes from YOU, the health care worker!
- Be welcoming and non-judgemental
- Be consistent – patients talk to each other!
- Answer questions honestly
- Be positive and encourage questions
- Be supportive





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**Any questions?**





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Wits Reproductive Health & HIV Institute

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**With special thanks to Anova Health Institute  
for the use of their materials**

