Chemsex Increases High-Risk Sexual Behaviors in HIV-Positive Men who have Sex with Men

Ignacio Labayen de Inza
WHY THIS PRESENTATION IS IMPORTANT?

• According to Positive Voices Survey (2014), 3 of every 10 men living with HIV in England and Wales attending sexual health clinics reported having engaged in Chemsex in the previous year.

• According to Antidote Data, 47% of the 2300 MSM who accessed their services asking for support between 2012 and 2018 are men living with HIV.
  – 50% of them report that their drug use escalated after their diagnosis
  – 33% of them claim they initiated use of drugs following diagnosis with HIV

- Positive Voices Survey 2014, presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI 2016)
- Oliver Stevens, Monty Moncrieff, Mitzy Gaffos (2019) Chemsex-related drug use and its association with health outcomes in men who have sex with men a cross-sectional analysis of Antidote clinic service data. Published in Sexually Transmitted Infections
BEFORE ANYTHING...

* Chemsex affects only a subset of gay, bi and MSM

* Not all MSM using drugs are engaged in Chemsex

* Not all engaged in Chemsex will experience problems
WHAT IS CHEMSEX?

Men using specific drugs to facilitate sex with other men.

Chemsex is where men take a certain drug or drugs because they are about to have sex.
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

* Marked **change in drugs used**, which enhance the sex drive and the need of sex

* Their use has been accompanied by **higher-risk sexual activity** than has ever been observed or associated with any other kind of drug use

* Users of these drugs can feel **invulnerable to harm, supremely confident**, dismissive of consequences, sexually adventurous, experience a heightened sense of pleasure, and can possess a stamina and endurance that may **keep them awake for many days**, sleeping with many partners.

* **Hook-up apps** and new technologies are very useful to connect with others who are involved in this reality.

* **Sexual assaults** while under the influence of drugs in sexually charged environments are common
WHAT ARE THE DRUGS INVOLVED IN CHEMSEX AND THEIR EFFECTS?
CRYSTAL METH – TINA
HOW DO CRYSTAL METH AND MEPHEDRONE INCREASE HIGH RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS?

- Extremely strong stimulants

- Mainly for sex, affects the ability to avoid risks and to make right choices

- Prolonged high, that can keep people awake for days.

- Neglect of any other commitments, becoming sex the highest priority.
Powder, but comes dissolved as a liquid. It’s ingested

Depressant but at the right dose gives euphoric effect, people also use it compensate the effects of stimulants.

Very cheap to buy online

1 – 2 ml dose – VERY dose specific, easy to over dose

Can ‘go under’ – comatose

Fatal at higher dose

Inability to give sexual consent – sexual assaults
GHB / GBL

2 DISTINCT ISSUES

TOXICITY / OVERDOSE
- Accidental
- Provoked

In London in 2015, someone died every 12 days because of GHB/GBL

DEPENDENCY
CONTEXT OF USE

SAUNAS / SEX-ON PREMISES VENUES
CHILL OUTS / SEX PARTIES
Apps / Websites...
LET’S TALK ABOUT GRINDR
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<td>En busca de</td>
<td>Este momento</td>
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WHY PEOPLE DO IT?

- It’s fun
- Disinhibitor / Self-esteem / Confidence
- Boredom
- Anxiety
- Loneliness / intimacy / isolation
- Identity and belonging (Everyone does it)
- ‘Ritual’, sometimes associated with slamming
- Sexual experimentation
From “Huggy” to Hardcore
THANK YOU FOR COMING

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