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Chemsex in PrEP users of a community-based center PrEP Point Plus

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DISCLOSURE

The author of the presentation has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Regione Emilia Romagna

Companies:

- Gilead Science
- ViiV Healthcare
- MSD

BACKGROUND

Chemsex, a phenomenon that concerns MSM in particular, is on the rise in Bologna, too.

Based on the current narrative, there could be a correlation between the use of PrEP, the increase in chemsex and the increase in STIs.



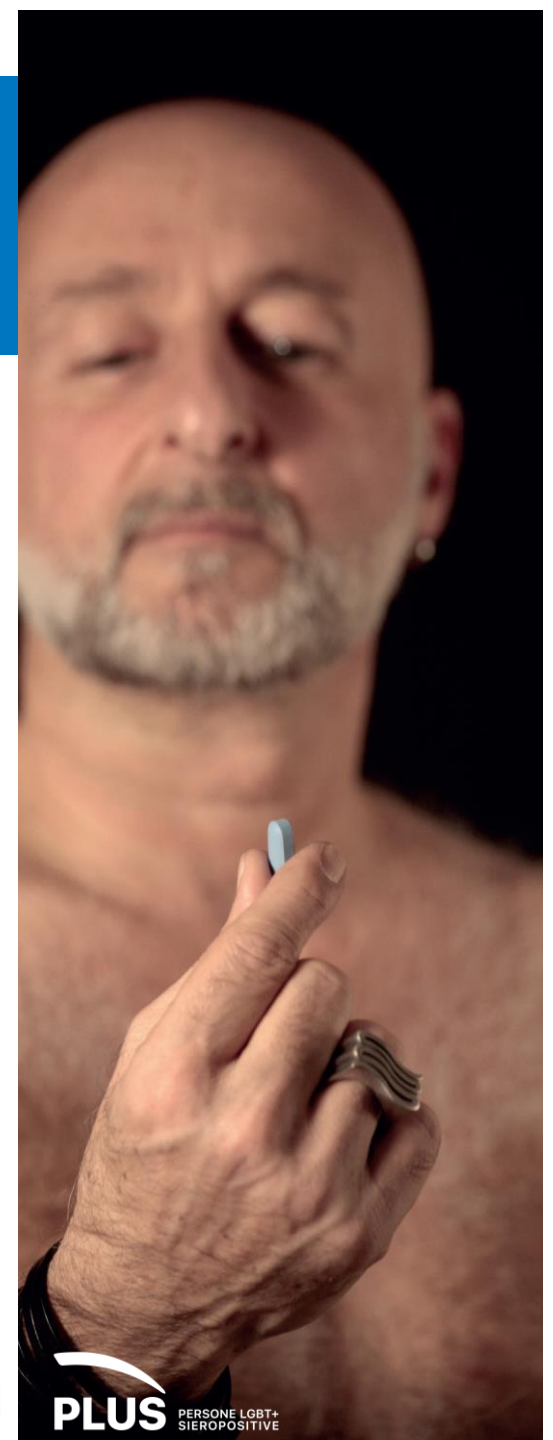
STUDY DESIGN

The analysis was performed on

- risk exposure
- substance use and frequency

on the basis of online questionnaires completed by PrEP Point Plus (PPP) users every 3 months, and from the results of screening and molecular tests performed at the PPP.

All users were enrolled in the observational study "Sexcheck" in 2021-2022.



Population characteristics

Nation	Percentage
Italy	91,09
Brazil	2,78
Venezuela	0,78
Ecuador	0,67
Argentina	0,67
Australia	0,67
Ukraine	0,67
Dominican Republic	0,56
Arizona, USA	0,56
Vietnam	0,56
Croatia	0,56
Swiss	0,22
Colombia	0,22

Educational level	Percentage
University	64,36
High school	29,29
Middle School	4,79

Sexual orientation	Percentage
Homosexual	93,76
Bisexual	4,45
Heterosexual	1,45

Median Age – range 39 (21-63)

Perceived Gender Identity	Percentage
Male	93,76
Female	4,45
Other Identity	1,45

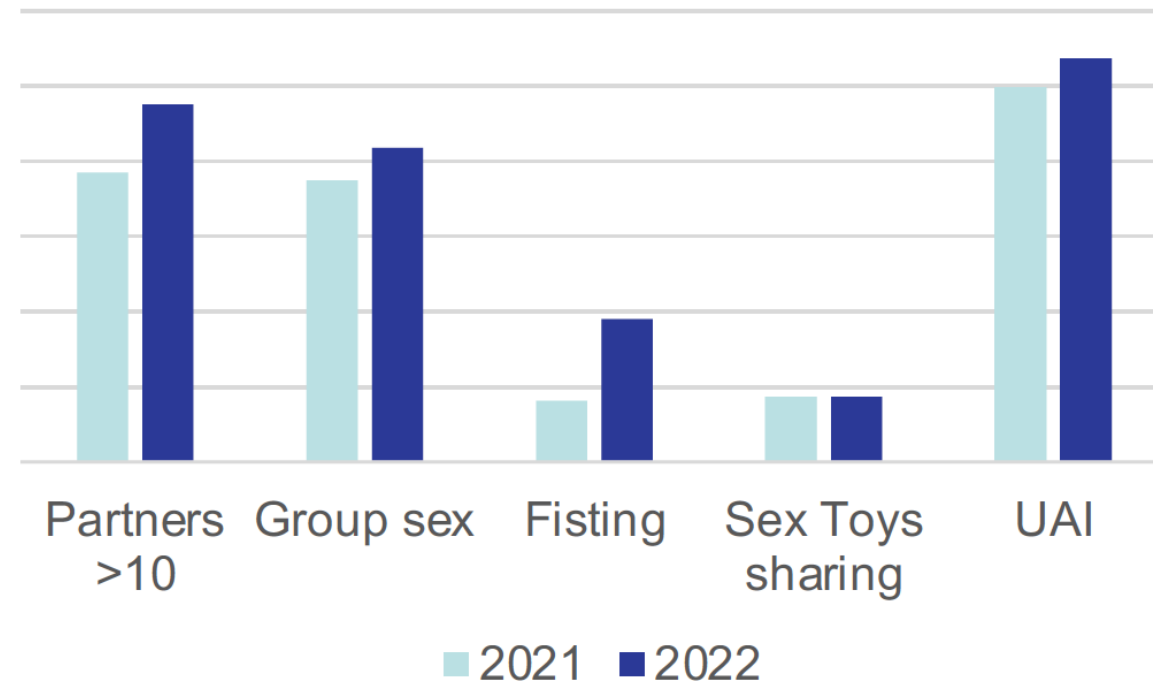


RESULTS – RISK EXPOSURE

- In 2021, we had 46 chem users out of 150 prep users (30.7%).
- In 2022, PrEP users rose to 165 and chem users to 63 (38%).
- In 2022, the no. of sexual partners among chem users increased from 38.5% to 47.5% (>10), while it remains stable or even declining in the other segments analyzed.

Risky sexual practices such as group sex (41.8% in 2022, 37.4% in 2021), fisting (19% in 2022, 8.2% in 2021), UAI (53.7% in 2022, 49.8% in 2021), non-use of condoms (34.7% in 2022, 30.7% in 2021).

Risk exposure in chem-sex users



RESULTS - STIs

About STIs in the chem user group in 2022 we observe 38.6% of NG and 36.4% of CT both stationaries compared to 2021; syphilis at 25% in 2022, was at 22.2% in 2021.

The median age of users who received at least 1 of this diagnosis is between 35 and 38 years in 2022, between 38 and 45 years in 2021.

Cumulative incidence of STIs

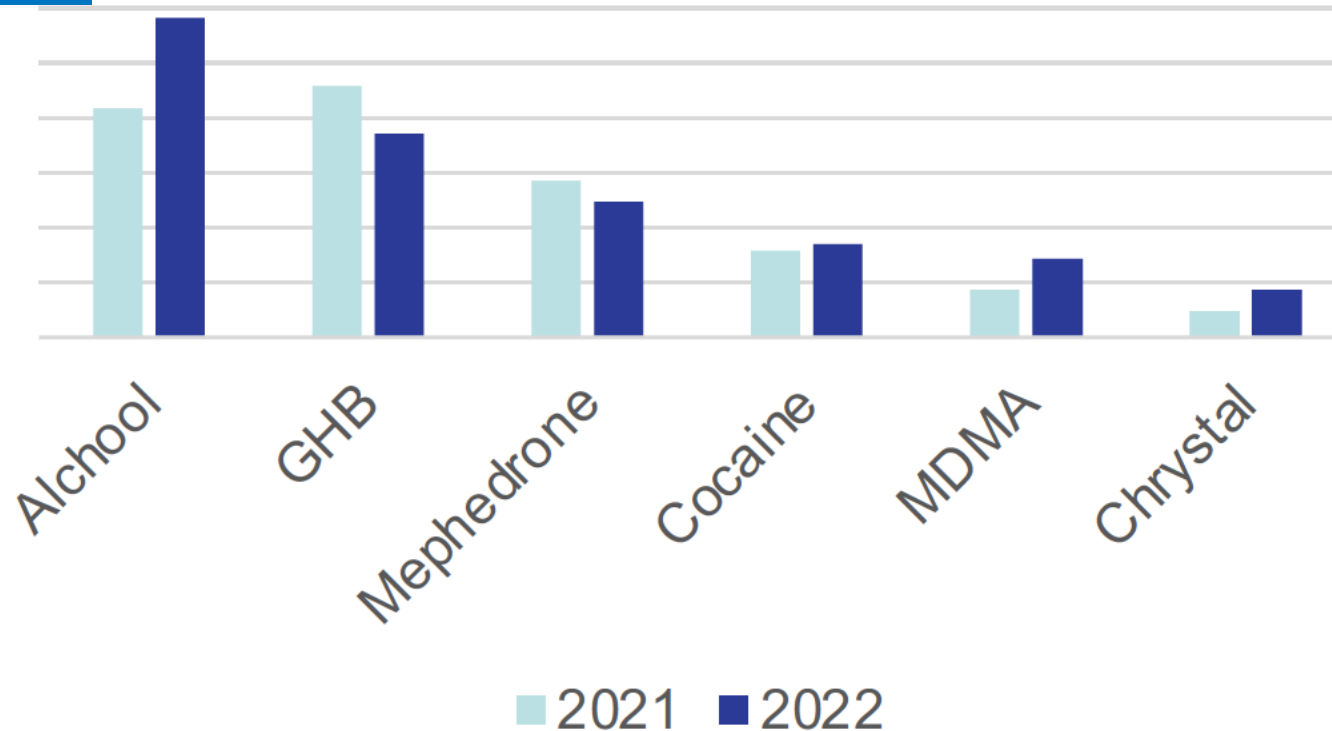
	% Reactive outcomes 2021	Median age 2021	% Reactive outcomes 2022	Median age 2022
Chemsex us.				
NG	38,8	34 (27-41)	38,6	35 (21-57)
CT	38,8	36 (28-52)	36,4	36 (21-55)
THPA	22,2	45 (31-57)	25,0	38 (22-57)
Non Chemsex us.				
NG	40,3	37 (21-62)	31,1	39 (24-54)
CT	40,3	38 (29-49)	50,8	38 (21-58)
THPA	19,2	38 (28-48)	18,0	43 (29-62)

In the group of PrEP users who do not use chem, in 2022 we observe 31% of NG (it was 40% in 2021), 50.8% of CT (it was 40% in 2021), 18% of syphilis (it was 19.2% in 2021).

RESULTS - SUBSTANCES

Substances in chem-sex users

The most used substances are mephedrone – used in various ways - and GHB



Mephedrone use	2021	2022
Sniffed, n (%)	37 (80,0)	46 (73,0)
Intravenous, n (%)	-	6 (9,5)
Intramuscular, n (%)	12 (26,0)	14 (22,2)
Oral, n (%)	9 (19,5)	6 (9,5)
Rectal, n (%)	8 (17,4)	6 (9,5)

CONCLUSIONS

We observe a decline in 2022 in the use of mephedrone and GHB traditionally associated with chemsex in PrEP users. However, this does not appear to be followed by a decline in STIs which remain stable.

While in those who do not chemsex we observe an increase in chlamydia of over 10% despite a slight decrease in other STIs.

We also observe an increase in the demand for PrEP. A follow-up is planned for the two-year period 2023-2024



Thank you for your attention

