

Chemsex linked with increased diagnoses of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

May 23 2018

Chemsex—the use of crystallised methamphetamine, mephedrone, γ -hydroxybutyrate or γ -butyrolactone and to a lesser extent cocaine and ketamine to facilitate sex—has emerged as a new phenomenon in the UK and across Europe amongst gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM). A new *HIV Medicine* study reveals that chemsex disclosure in sexual health settings is associated with higher rates of new diagnoses of HIV, Hepatitis C, and other sexually transmitted infections.

For the study, researchers reviewed information on all GBMSM attending 2 London sexual health clinics over a 13 month period. Those who reported that they had participated in chemsex were 5-times more likely to have a new diagnosis of HIV than those who had not participated in chemsex.

Although it was not possible to determine if chemsex causes HIV infection, the investigators note that use of drugs in sexual settings and alcohol has been linked with condomless anal sex and other behaviours predisposing to HIV transmission.

"These are the first published data clearly demonstrating a link between a new HIV diagnosis and Chemsex," said senior author Dr. Aseel Hegazi, of St. George's University Hospital Foundation Trust, in London. "At risk GBMSM participating in Chemsex should access

prevention strategies such as [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#), or PrEP, and there is a need to increase public awareness regarding the potential consequences of Chemsex."

More information: *HIV Medicine*, [DOI: 10.1111/hiv.12629](https://doi.org/10.1111/hiv.12629)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Chemsex linked with increased diagnoses of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (2018, May 23) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-chemsex-linked-hiv-sexually-transmitted.html>

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