Chemsex: A phenomenon of sex and drug use among men who have sex with men

D. Khoryaev¹, V. Skryabin².

¹Moscow Research and Practical Center on Addictions, Medical Rehabilitation Department No.15, Moscow, Russia.

²Moscow Research and Practical Center on Addictions, Department No.16, Moscow, Russia.

Objectives:

To review literature relating to chemsex issue and describe the findings of a focussed, qualitative study of this topic.

Background:

Recreational drug use among men who have sex with men (MSM) in most western European countries has historically centred on 'club drugs', such as ecstasy and cocaine. However, emerging clinic and community data indicate a gradual transition towards drugs such as crystal methamphetamine, GHB/GBL and mephedrone. These drugs can trigger feelings of intense sexual arousal, sometimes leading to a combination of drugs and sex in a practice often referred to as 'Chemsex'.

Materials and Methods:

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 50 MSM who underwent the inpatient treatment and rehabilitation at the Moscow Research and Practical Center on Addictions and who reported using crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone or GHB/GBL during sex.

Results and Conclusions:

Men described how crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone or GHB/GBL facilitated sex with a high number of partners, often as group sex taking place over several days. Accounts of sexual assault while under the influence of drugs were reported, as was unintended unprotected anal intercourse (with potential HIV sero-discordant partners). While many men felt in control of their chemsex, others were experiencing significant harms to their social, emotional, physical and sexual well-being, but described difficulty accessing relevant harm reduction information or services. We make a conclusion that sexual health services should develop or upscale drug services situated within their clinics and improve linkages to psycho-therapeutic services.

Khoryaev Denis
horyaev@gmail.com