The use of crystal methamphetamine, GHB/GBL and mephedrone in sexual settings among gay men in London

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Historically
• Popular drugs: ecstasy, cocaine, ketamine

Currently
• Popular drugs: mephedrone, GHB/GBL, crystal meth (?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of drug</th>
<th>Street names</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mephedrone</td>
<td>Meow Meow, MCAT, plant food</td>
<td>Snorted as a powder, injected or administered rectally</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHB/GBL</td>
<td>G, Gina, liquid ecstasy</td>
<td>Swallowed in small liquid doses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crystal meth</td>
<td>Crystal, Ice, Tina, T</td>
<td>Snorted as powder, smoked in glass pipe, or administered rectally</td>
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• All have stimulant properties, but also:
  – Enhance sexual arousal
  – Facilitate sexual longevity
  – Enable high partner turnover
  – Facilitate sexual adventure

• Increasing evidence mephedrone, GHB/GBL and crystal meth used for specific and intentional sexual purpose
• **Chemsex**: “Sex between men that occurs under the influence of drugs taken immediately preceding and/or during the sexual session”
Use of chemsex drugs

• EMIS survey of 2010
  – 38 countries across Europe
  – 176,000 responses from MSM

• EMIS data for England (within previous 4 weeks)
  – Crystal meth 0.7% (London 2.9%)
  – Mephedrone 2.9% (London 10.2%)
  – GHB/GBL 1.6% (London 5.5%)

• Variation by HIV status
  – HIV positive gay men 8 times more likely to have used crystal meth
  – HIV positive gay men 4 times more likely to have used GHB/GBL
Aims: to explore social context of chemsex; motivations for drug use during sex; experience of harm and harm reduction service development need

30 in-depth interview with gay men in key South London boroughs

Focus groups with gay men, clinical and community service providers

Sample characteristics:
- 13 HIV positive V.s 17 last test negative
- Mean age 36
- 1/3 sample were migrant gay men
Personal and social context

- ↑ cost, ↓ quality of ecstasy and cocaine
- Mephedrone and GHB/GBL cheap and widely accessible
- Injection of mephedrone and/or crystal meth reported by one third
- Access and uptake for sex facilitated by GPS sexual networking apps
Impact of drugs on sex

- Vastly increased sexual desire and libido (esp. crystal meth)
- Sexual longevity, partner turnover and sexual adventurism
- Complicated relationship with sexual risk taking
  - Causal pathways
  - Reversal causal pathways
  - Third variable (personality) rationales
- One third had received STI diagnosis within the previous 12 months
- Widespread reporting of rectal trauma and penile abrasions
Negative experience & harm

- **Overdosing** (esp. GHB/GBL related)
- Significant concerns relating to sexual consent
- Complications of ‘booty bumping’ (intra-rectal delivery)
- Acute harms to mental health
- Majority had not accessed professional support
- Many men wary of generic drug services
• David Reid
• Ford Hickson
• Sergio Torres Rueda
• Peter Weatherburn
• Axel Schmidt
• Paul Steinberg

• South London Chemsex study: www.sigmaresearch.org.uk/chemsex
  (funded by London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham)
• EMIS 2010: www.emis-project.eu
  (funded by EU Executive Agency for Health & Consumers)