



CHEMSEX

# An exploratory research on « chemsex » among MSM in the Brussels-Capital Area

Van Acker Jonas

Researcher at *Observatoire du sida et des sexualités*, Saint-Louis University, Responsible of the « chemsex » projet

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# Content of the presentation

- 1. Motivations of the research**
- 2. Presentation**
- 3. Methodology**
- 4. Quantitative survey**
- 5. Key issues**
- 6. Bibliography**

# 1) Motivations in literature

- **Lots of studies on drug use by MSM**  
2003, M. Jauffert; 2010, S. Fournier
- **« New » hot topic in literature : chemsex**
  - **Practice of using drugs in a sexual context.**
  - **This mainly occurs with MSM.**
- **The first studies came from the US and the UK**  
2013, D. Stuart; 2014, A. Bourne
- **Other studies have emerged in other countries such as Spain, Netherlands or France.**

# 1) Motivations on the field

- **Some concerns have been raised about chemsex by health professionals in Belgium.**
  - HIV clinicians, psychologists
- **Moreover, a support group has emerged at the *Rainbow House* in Brussels.**
  - « Let's talk about chemsex »
- **The topic remains unexplored in our country and must be thoroughly studied.**

## 2) Presentation

- **Type: exploratory research**
- **Objectives: evaluate and understand the phenomenon in the Brussels-Capital Area**
- **Period: 6 months**
  - Between July and December 2016
- **Supervisors: support committee**
  - scientific researchers, prevention associations and men who practice chemsex
- **Final results: 2017**

# 3) Methodology

## 1. Literature review

## 2. Online quantitative survey

## 3. Other sources :

- Interviews with health and prevention specialists
- Exploratory meetings with MSM who practice chemsex.
- Discussions with chemsexers on the geosocial networking apps (methodology inspired by *cultural studies*, see 2015, K. Race)

# 4) Online quantitative research

- **Period of data collection ?**
  - 4th Oct → 7th Nov 2016 (5 weeks)
- **Promotion ?**
  - Geosocial networking apps + social networking + parties
  - With the collaboration of : Ex *Æquo*, CES, Modus Vivendi, The Rainbow House, the group of discussion « let's talk about chemsex ».
- **Results expected ?**
  - Provide answers on sociodemographic profiles, contexts/locations, types and modes of consumption while practicing chemsex and prevention

**Ongoing data analysis → Results in 2017.**



Promotion of the survey with this link : [www.chemsex.be](http://www.chemsex.be)



## Here are some first results :

<b>Number of persons who practice chemsex</b>	<b>N = 230 (total answers = 369)</b>
<b>Target audience of the study</b>	<b>Homosexual men (n = 195)</b>
<b>HIV prevalence</b>	<b>33% of HIV + among men (n = 76)</b>
<b>Testing for HIV</b>	<b>53% in the last 3 months (n = 127)</b>

# 5) Key issues about chemsex

- **Remarque : these lines of reflection are mainly based on foreign literature and do not necessarily reflect Brussels reality**

# A) Chemsex: circumscribe the definition

Different chemsex perceptions among authors from several countries

<b>A. Bourne (UK) (2014)</b>	<b>Use of certain drugs in a sexual context (GHB/GBL, Mephedrone, Crystal Meth)</b>
<b>L. Knoop (Netherlands) (2015)</b>	<b>A large approach of chemsex (excluding alcohol, poppers and cannabis)</b>
<b>P. Fernandez-Davila (Spain) (2016)</b>	<b>A wider approach on chemsex (including all the drugs). Drugs are used in order to increase the time of the sexual act.</b>

**Aside from that, other questions still remains...**

**So, what is really chemsex about in Belgium ?**

## **B) A target difficult to reach**

- **A « consumer profile » difficult to establish**
- **Many taboos : substance use + Sexual Orientation = double stigmatization (2013, D. Stuart)**
- **However, several characteristics tend to emerge:**
  - Mainly an audience of MSM
  - Digital technologies users (Grindr, Scruff, etc.)
  - A very mobile audience
  - A new consumer audience

# C) Modes and types of consumption

« Monitoring habits and trends related to hidden and stigmatized behavior such as illicit drug use is hard to put into practice »

2016, OEDT

- **Substances**

- Emis, 2010; Sialon II, 2014 : indications on the products consumed by MSM → but data remain incomplete or too old.
- Emergence of a market of new synthetic products (NPS) : cheap and very addictive
- Internet constitutes an access to drug use.

- **Modes of consumption**

- « slamming »
  - 2013, N. Foureur ; 2015, L. Knoops
- Is slamming (injection in a sexual context) more prevalent compared to other modes of consumption ?

## **D) Places and contexts of consumption**

- **Prominence of collective and private evenings: « behind closed doors? » >< other types of locations?**

## **E) Main motivations of chemsexers**

- Isolation, relationship breakup, find a community
- Overcoming barriers such as homophobia / « homo-scepticism »
- Maximize pleasure
- Make sex last longer
- « Harder » sexual practices
- Etc.

**→ Will of transcendence ?**

## **F) Impact on chemsexers**

- **Problems of consent, libido, exhaustion, injuries ...**
- **Addiction to both sex and drugs: between « need » and « excess »**
- **HIV and STIs ?**
- **Impacts on social / professional life ?**

**But these impacts are not necessarily the same for everybody.**

**Some people tend to « deal » with their consumption of drugs.**

# G) Prevention

- **Tensions between:**
    - Moralism, behavioural prescription or even forms of pathologization
    - Dedramatization (2015, K. Race).
  - **Therefore, the question is to define the structures, the aid (if needed) necessary to help, inform or even advise chemsexers.**
  - **Such structures and reflexions around prevention do exist (exemple of the *56 Dean Clinic*) in the UK**
    - 2016, D. Stuart, L. Chislett
- Still to be explored and developped in Belgium.**



**Thank you for your  
attention !**

Mail adress: [jonas.vanacker@usaintlouis.be](mailto:jonas.vanacker@usaintlouis.be)

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