

# Polydrug use during chemsex: single and intersecting sexual effects of commonly used drugs

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 **frontiers**  
in Public Health



# What is chemsex?

Intentional use of drugs among gay men to enhance sexual experiences

GHB/GBL, crystal meth(amphetamine), cathinones (*4MMC*, *3MMC*, etc.),  
MDMA/Ecstasy, cocaine, speed, ketamine



16-22% of gay men; 25% - 50% of specific groups engage in chemsex

# Chemsex context



<https://driesverhoeven.com/en/project/the-narcosexuals/>

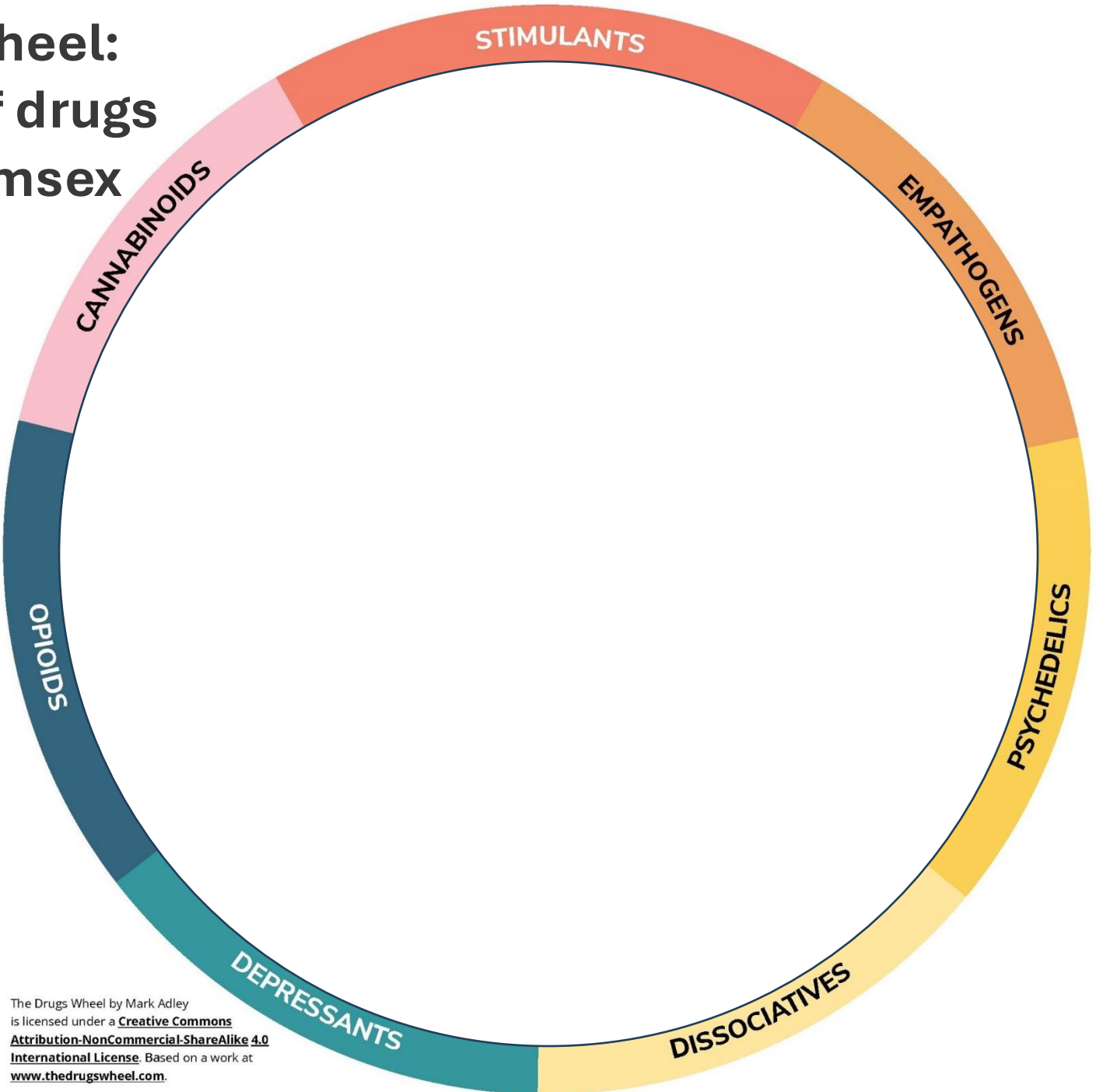
## Narcosexuals





# **SEXUAL EFFECTS OF CHEMSEX DRUGS**

# Pharmacosex Wheel: Sexual effects of drugs used during chemsex



The Drugs Wheel by Mark Adley is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Based on a work at [www.thedrugswheel.com](http://www.thedrugswheel.com).

# Sexual effects of drugs used during chemsex

## Stimulants

- Crystal meth ('TINA')
- Cocaine ('coke')
- Amphetamine ('speed')

*Initial euphoria and sexual arousal*

*More intense and rough sex; risky behavior*

*Long term use: mental, physical and social impact*

## Empathogens

- Ecstasy / MDMA
- Cathinones (3-MMC, 4-MMC, 4-MEC, etc.)

*Emotional connection and openness, sexual intimacy, desire, bodily sensations*

*Cathinones: combine stimulant and empathogenic effects*

*Erectile dysfunction, condomless sex*

## Depressants

- Alcohol
- GHB/GBL ('G')

*Increased sexual desire and excitement; self-confidence*

*Reduced desire, impaired performance, blackouts, risky behavior*

The background is a dark, almost black, space filled with several thin, bright red lines that crisscross the frame, resembling a laser grid or a stylized network. In the center, a white rectangular box is superimposed, containing the main title text in a bold, teal-colored font.

# **INTERSECTING EFFECTS OF CHEMSEX DRUGS**

# Polydrug use

## What?

*Simultaneous or sequential use of two or more psychoactive substances*

## How?

*Combining substances or use a substance that contains multiple active ingredients*

## Why?

*To enhance sexual experience or mitigate negative side effects*

→ Polydrug use in a sexual context is conceptually part of chemsex



# Intersecting effects

Gain insight into motives, and combined effects of categories of substances

Expert consultation to develop a schematic overview of intersecting sexual effects



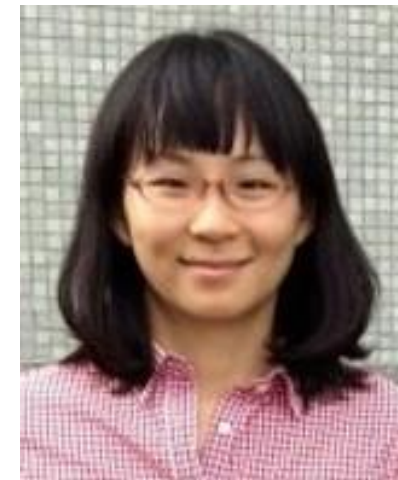
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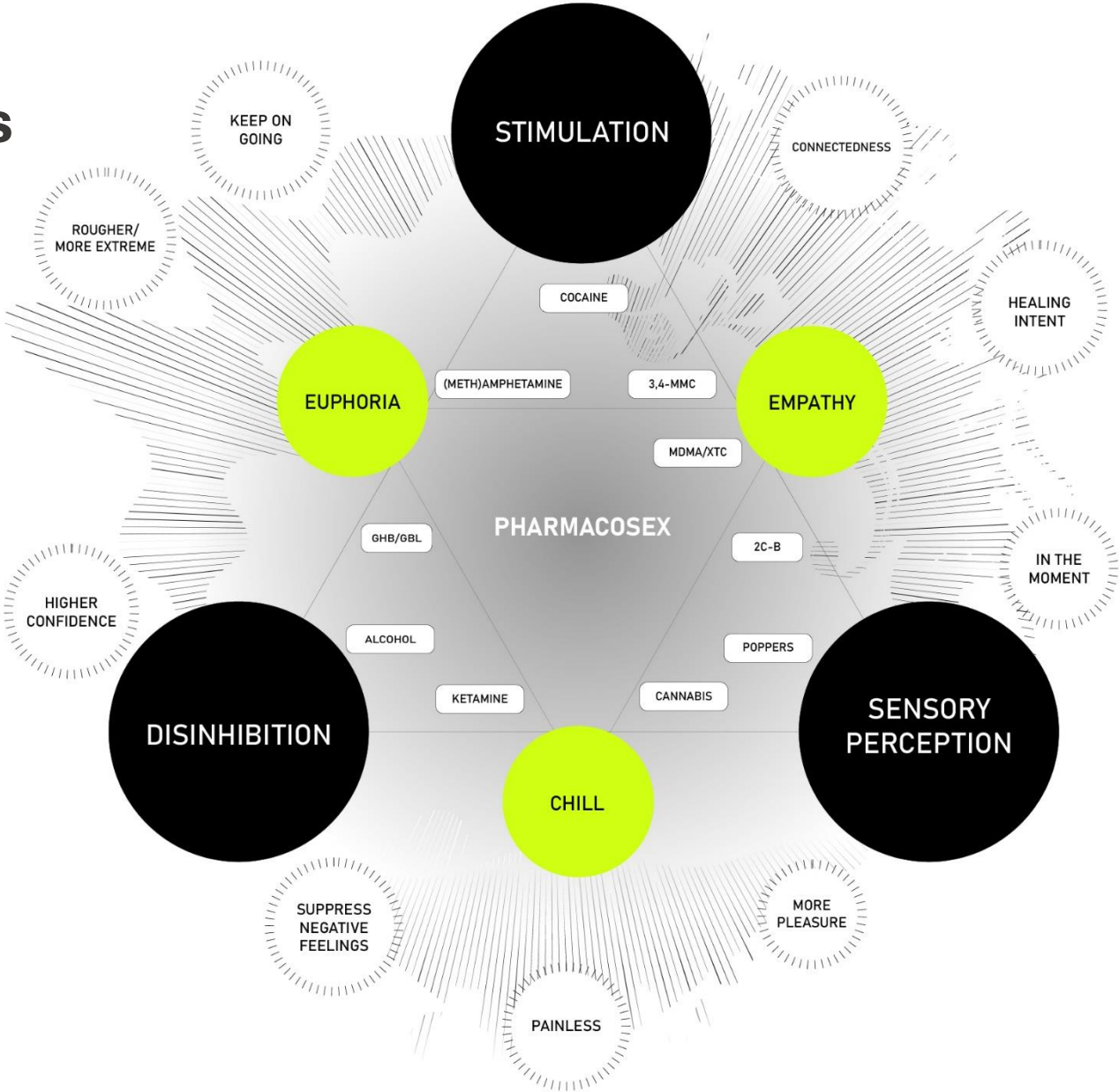


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# Layered Model of Single and Intersecting Effects



# Objectives

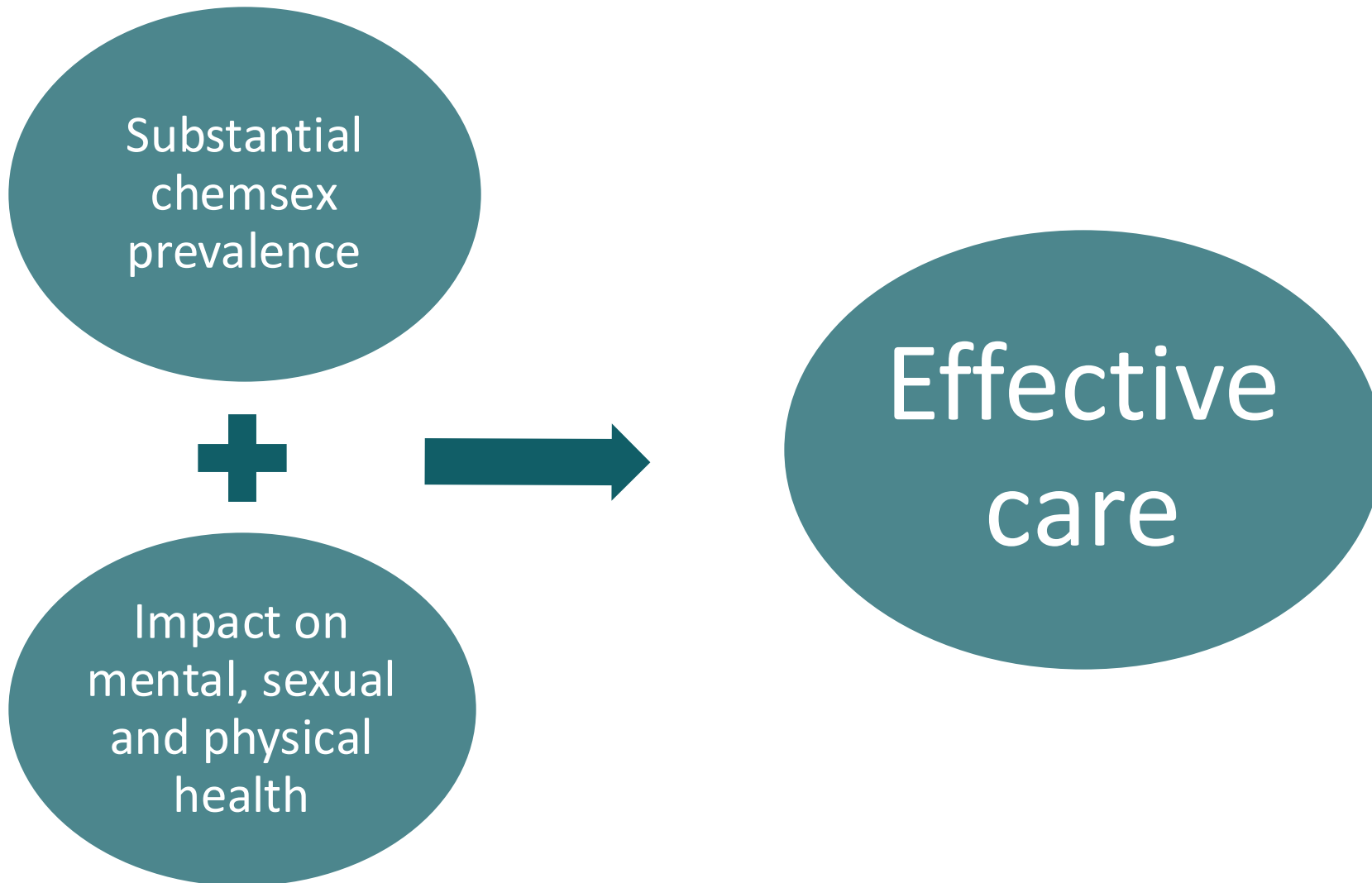
Drug-positive perspective

Recognize that chemsex carries the potential for harmful consequences

Raise awareness among healthcare providers and peer support groups

Be a part of the effective support puzzle for chemsex

# Aim of the paper



Addressing chemsex

★

New good practice statement

Consolidated guidelines on HIV, viral hepatitis and STI prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations

World Health Organization

EACS  
European  
AIDS  
Clinical  
Society

EACS Guidelines

Chemsex

last updated Oct 16, 2025

[www.itg.be/chemsexconference2026](http://www.itg.be/chemsexconference2026)

# Chemsex Conference

3 to 5 March 2026  
ITM Antwerp



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