

Identification and Referral for Sexualised Drug Use in a Metropolitan Sexual Health Centre

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Background:

Sexualised drug use (SDU) is a risk factor for unsafe sexual practices in men who have sex with men (MSM). Intervention can reduce risk behaviours and facilitate STI prevention. Identification of use, and subsequent referral, is therefore an important aspect of sexual health assessment. Previous research indicates that drug use may be under-identified in Sexual Health Centres.

Methods:

In June 2018, two new questions were introduced to the computer assisted self-interview (CASI) used by Sydney Sexual Health Centre (SSHC). These were based on those used by Dean St (London, UK): "Have you used drugs during sex in the last 6 months? (e.g. Ice/Crystal Meth, G)" and "Do you think there are any issues with your drug use"? One year (01/12/2018 to 30/11/2019) of responses were analysed. Although the questions are asked at each visit, only registration visits at the clinic were included.

Results:

2246 MSM attended the clinic for the first time during the study period. 10% (n=223) indicated that they had used drugs during sex in the last 6 months. 13% (n=29) of these indicated that they thought they had issues with their use. There was evidence that 48% (n=18) of these were offered referral or information. 74% (n=166 of 223) were asked general drug use questions. 62% (n=107) indicated that they used at least one drug commonly associated with Chemsex (crystal-methamphetamine, GHB). The next most popular drug used was MDMA, 23% (n=38), followed closely by THC, 17% (n=28).

Conclusion:

Rates of SDU within the last 6 months in this clinical sample appears less than in other community-based samples. Despite the introduction of SDU questions, more than half of patients self-identifying as having issues do not have evidence of appropriate information or referral. Exploration of the barriers to engage clients identified with problematic SDU in sexual health services is required.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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