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Incidence and predictors of the initiation of amyl nitrite use among gay and bisexual men

Background: Amyl nitrite use among gay and bisexual men (GBM) is higher than in other populations and has also been implicated in sexual risk behaviours. Amyl is often used with other drugs such as methamphetamine in the context of chemsex for sex partying.

Methods: In 2014-2015, 1710 men enrolled in the Flux cohort study of drug use among GBM; by Dec 2017, 1273 men had completed at least one follow-up interview, 53.5% of whom completed all five rounds. We identify incident rates and predictive factors at baseline that are associated with the initiation of amyl use at follow-up.

Results: Mean age was 34.9 years and 35.3% reported that half or more of their gay friends used drugs. 29.7% of men never used amyl, either prior to or during the study. At baseline 37.7% reported amyl use in the previous six months. Between baseline and follow-up: 28.3% reported continuous use, 9.4% ceased use during a follow-up round and did not re-commence, and 6.4% had initiated use at follow-up.

Initiation of amyl use at follow-up was associated with younger age (HR 0.95; 95%CI 0.92-0.98), more than ten sex partners in the previous six months (HR 2.77; 95%CI 1.64-4.69), and higher risk alcohol use (HR 1.29; 95%CI 1.15-1.46), at baseline.

Conclusion: Initiation of amyl use among GBM appears to be fairly common, especially among younger men. Men who were more sexually active and heavier consumers of alcohol, were more likely to commence amyl use over time.