

Non-Prescription Drug Use Among HIV Positive Gay and Bisexual Men in Australia: A Latent Class Analysis with Sequela for Health and Well-Being

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Introduction and Aims: Establishing typologies of drug use among gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (GBMSM) who are living with HIV, as well as differences in health outcomes between them, is important in addressing health inequalities within this population. We sought to determine how use of non-prescription drugs is clustered for these individuals and to establish the sequela of such drug use for broader aspects of health and well-being, including STI diagnosis, mental health and physical health.

Design and Methods: We examined past-year drug use reported by 747 Australian GBMSM as part of the HIV Futures 8 survey, a large cross-sectional survey of people living with HIV. We tested between two and five latent class models of specific drug use and conducted cross-class comparisons of past-year STI diagnosis and self-reported mental and physical health.

Results: We identified four distinct drug use typologies: 'chemsex use', 'minimal use', 'analgesic and sedative use', and 'diverse use'. The 'chemsex use' and 'diverse use' classes had a markedly higher likelihood of STI diagnosis relative to the other two classes, while the 'analgesic and sedative use' class reported markedly poorer physical and mental health scores than other classes.

Discussions and Conclusions: While Australian GBMSM living with HIV have higher rates of drug use compared to the general population, our analysis indicates that patterns of use are not uniform within this group. Specific patterns of drug use are related to distinct health inequalities, and this should be accounted for when addressing the needs of men who use drugs differently.

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