

Opportunities For Moderation In The Management Of Problematic Chemse X

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ISSUP | INTERNATIONAL
SOCIETY OF
SUBSTANCE USE
PROFESSIONALS

MALAYSIA chapter



- Chemsex vs Problematic Chemsex
- Chemsex Management
- Moderation within the Harm Reduction and Recovery Framework
- Moderation in Problematic Chemsex Management

Contents

Chemsex

- Coined by David Stuart
- No consensus on definition yet
- Describes gay men (MSM) who use **specific** substances including MET, GHB and synthetic cathinone's to engage in long sex sessions with **multiple partners**
- Substance Use to facilitate sex - enhance, prolong sexual activity, group sex, confidence
- In Asia definition of Chemsex is adjusted to **include poppers, ecstasy, cocaine, ketamine, cannabis and non-prescribed drugs** (Chemsex In Asia Community Manual)

Sexualised substance use (SDU)	Chemsex
A wide range of drugs used just before or during a sexual activity – usually includes all popular drugs used by MSM in the area, including: methamphetamine, poppers, ecstasy, foxy, ketamine, and other new psychoactive drugs.	Any combination of methamphetamine, mephedrone, and GHB/GBL used by MSM before or during sex to facilitate a long sexual session with multiple sex partners.

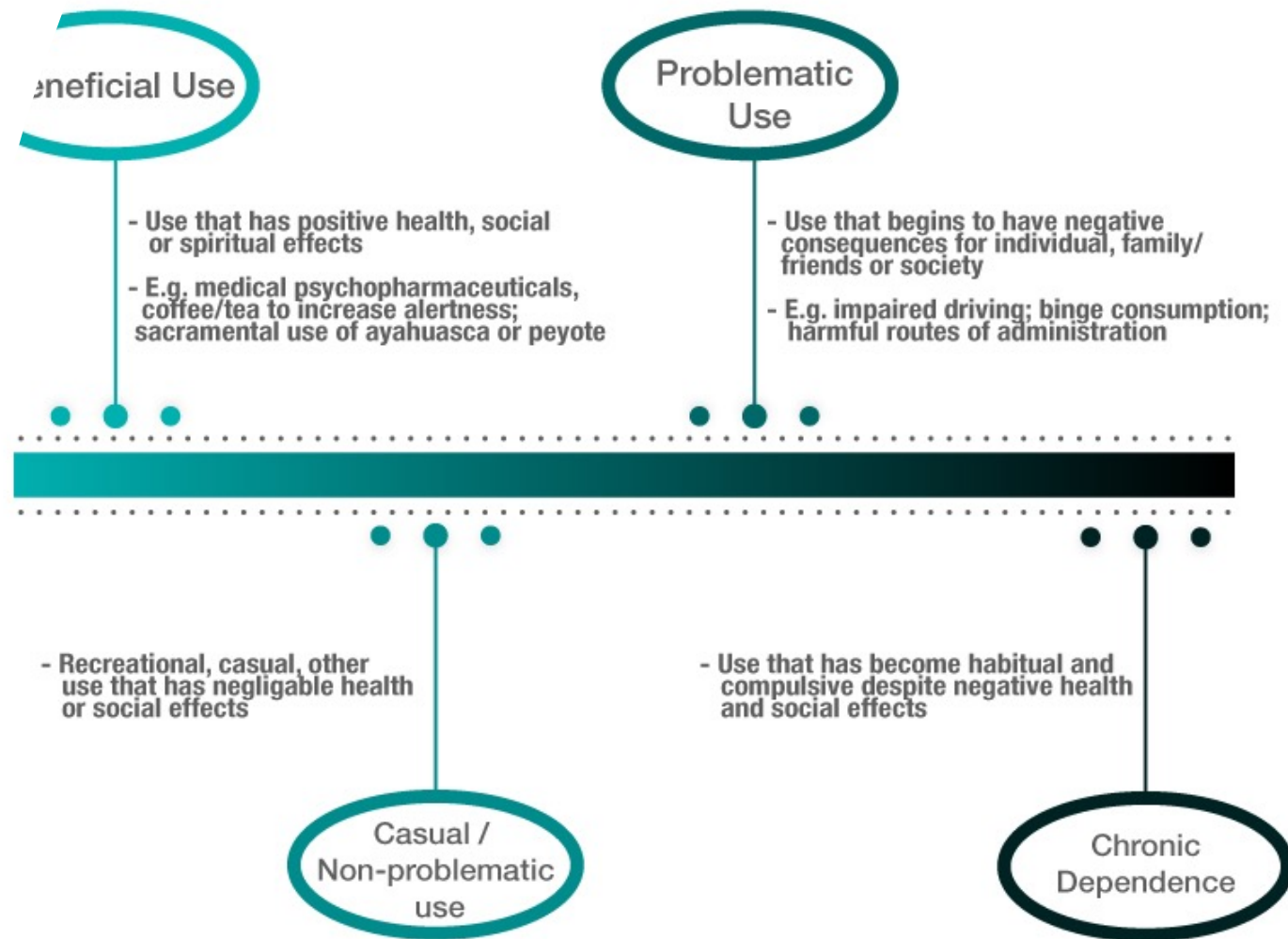
Source: Chemsex in Asia: A Community Manual on Sexualised Substance Use among MSM

Not all sexualized
drug use is
chemsex

Spectrum of Substance Use

Not all Chemsex is Problematic

- Problematic Chemsex leads to *negative consequences* impacting **health and wellbeing** either through **recurrent STIs, negative social outcomes** (e.g. job loss, **relationship** issues, **financial** distress) **adverse mental health** impact or **addiction** (Field et al, 2023)



Why do People Engage in Chemsex?

- Expectancy
- Intense sex
- Prolonged sex
- Trauma
- Belonging

*Often is intentional use

“Chemsex is attractive because it gives an illusion to resolve the common emotional and relational pain gay men live with.” (Silva Neves)

Risks Associated with Problematic Chemsex

HIV

STI

Condomless
sex

Anal Injuries

Internal
ejaculation

Overdose

SUD

Legal
consequences

Mental Health
(Psychosis)

Sexual Trauma

Chemsex Management at Organisational Level (Public health Harm Reduction)

- Safer drug use (minimise slamming, use bong)
- Needle exchange
- PrEP and PEP
- HIV & STI screening every 3 month
- Adherence to ART and mental health medication
- Increased awareness about drug use, overdose, needle sharing, medical and mental health consequences

(How Lim et al., 2018)

Existing Philosophy towards Addiction and Recovery

1

Abstinence Model
Dominates

2

Most people who are
concerned about SU are
not ready to be abstinent
(Tatarsky)

3

Abstinence for Substance
Use is feasible however,
many **behavioural
compulsions require
management**

4

Views on Sexual
Compulsions are **polarised**
between the
addiction/abstinence
model and
behavioural/emotional
management models

Harm Reduction and Recovery Spectrum

Process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential (SAMHSA)

Harm Reduction as an option along the continuum of care



HR – Prevention – Treatment – Recovery Management

Not all chemsex is problematic.

Though all chemsex carries the risk of harm, often this harm is minor, and users judge it worth the cost of the positive experiences they have. Some people may not experience harm at all. But there is a particular set of skills required to manage chemsex with less harm. This involves harm reduction, boundaries to protect one's life from detrimental consequences, an ability to self care and to care for others, and an appreciation of sober life and sober recreational activities. Through learning and using these skills, some gay men can manage chemsex recreationally and in ways that minimise harms.

Source: A call to action for effective responses to problematic chemsex

Moderation



LIMITS FREQUENCY



REDUCED INTENSITY



REDUCED QUANTITY

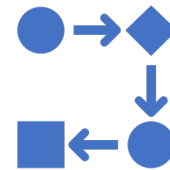
Finding an entry point



Meet people where they are
– reduced risk, moderation,
abstinence,



Work with what is important
to them; doesn't need to be
substance use related



Any change is good,
progression not perfection



Consistent small changes
over time

Moderation in Chemsex Management



Chemsex – most continue to engage in CF



David Stuart's Care Plan – most popular option
“take a break”



Abstinence can be challenging for Compulsive
Behaviours



Benefits: Reduce Risk, promote recovery pathway,
support, self management



In addition to other HR interventions – PrEP, PEP,
Kits, etc

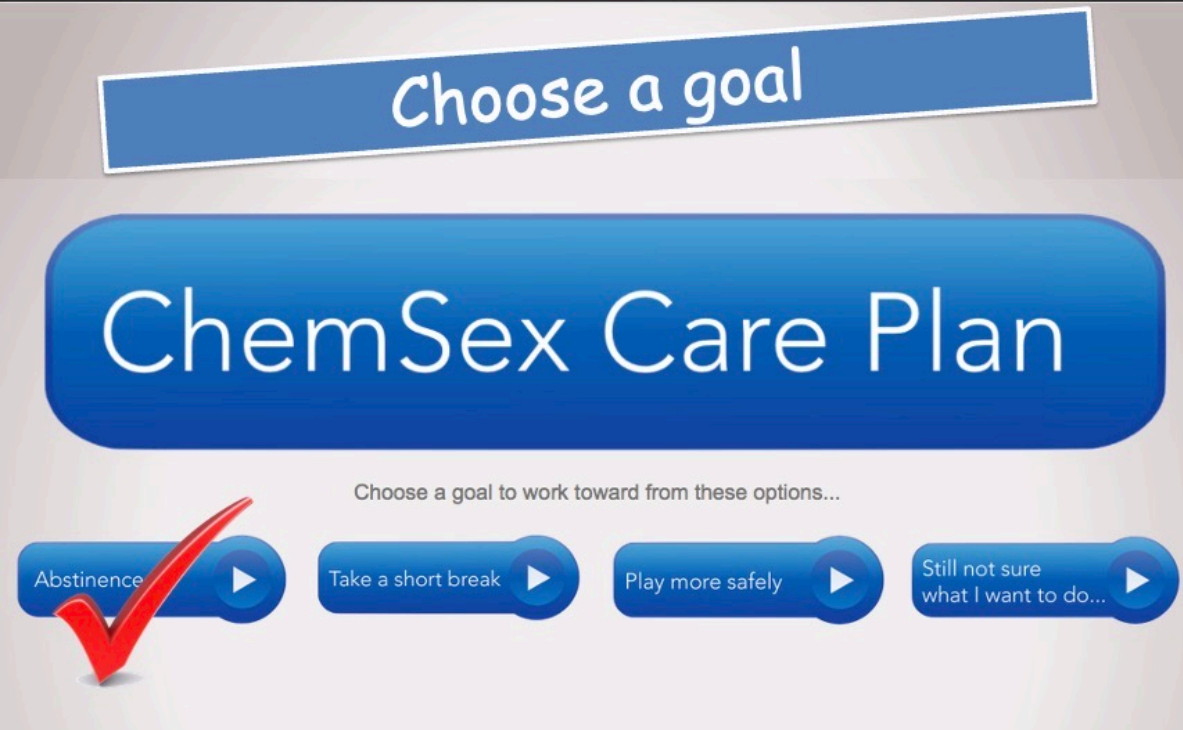
Integrative Harm Reduction Psychotherapy



Andrew Tatarsky

Chemsex Care Plan

- Motivational Interviewing
- Risk Management
- Relapse Prevention
- Personalised Goals
- <https://www.davidstuart.org/care-plan>



Choose a goal

ChemSex Care Plan

Choose a goal to work toward from these options...

- Abstinence ✓
- Take a short break
- Play more safely
- Still not sure what I want to do...

The screenshot shows a digital interface for selecting a goal. At the top, a blue banner says "Choose a goal". Below it is a large blue button with the text "ChemSex Care Plan". Underneath, a smaller text prompt reads "Choose a goal to work toward from these options...". There are four blue buttons with white play icons, each containing a goal option: "Abstinence" (with a large red checkmark), "Take a short break", "Play more safely", and "Still not sure what I want to do...".

Helpful Competencies

- Therapist Mindset (similar to “the spirit of MI” meeting clients where they are)
- View Harm Reduction and Moderation along a spectrum towards Recovery
- Sex-positive philosophy
- Non-judgemental



Summary

- Chemsex is the specific practice of using multiple drugs to facilitate sex among MSM
- Not all chemsex is harmful
- Meet the client where they are at
- Harm Reduction and Moderation is a pathway in recovery

Thank You