

## SEX ON CRYSTAL: THE DIVERSITY OF SETTINGS AND PRACTICES RELATED TO AUSTRALIAN GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN'S CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE USE

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**Background:** The *Crystal, Pleasures and Sex between Men* research project explored crystal methamphetamine use among gay and bisexual men (GBM) in Australia. Attention to such practices can also be construed as part of increasing global concern over the use of chemicals in sexual settings, popularly referred to as 'chemsex'. Despite the tendency in public health to describe chemsex as linked to risky sex and drug-taking, variations in local settings and practices make it difficult to identify a singular GBM experience of chemically-enhanced sexual practice.

**Methods:** Individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted between September 2017 and July 2018 with 88 GBM in Adelaide (n=16), Melbourne (n=28), Perth (n=16) and Sydney (n=28). Interviews explored the ways in which crystal is used, the pleasures and risks perceived in relation to having sex on crystal, and the strategies men employed to reduce the risks associated with its use. In this presentation, we focus on the contexts and patterns of crystal use men reported.

**Results:** Findings revealed that GBM's patterns of crystal methamphetamine use varied in terms of frequency, where they used, whom they used with, and how they used. These patterns changed as men moved across different networks. While reports of explicitly sexual contexts and use accord with how 'chemsex' is most commonly framed, other factors influence how practices are modified or sustained. This includes different modes of administration that GBM attributed to various sexual, social or even solo functions of use.

**Conclusion:** More attention should be paid to the diverse settings and practices men report to acknowledge the multiple patterns of use that shape GBM's experiences. Recognising these variations, and the meanings that underpin them, can aid in the development of harm reduction strategies that are more relevant to Australian GBM beyond those that focus on only one conception of chemsex.

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