

# INITIATING SEX WORK AMONG AUSTRALIAN GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

## Authors:

Prestage G,<sup>1</sup> Hammoud M,<sup>1</sup> Maher L,<sup>1</sup> Lea T,<sup>2</sup> Jin F,<sup>1</sup> Bath N,<sup>3</sup> Degenhardt L<sup>4</sup>, Bourne A<sup>5</sup>, Callander D<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kirby Institute, University of NSW, <sup>2</sup> Centre for Social Research in Health, University of NSW, <sup>3</sup> ACON, <sup>4</sup> National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of NSW, <sup>5</sup> Australian Research Centre in Sex Health & Society, La Trobe University

**Introduction:** Among gay and bisexual men (GBM), using drugs for sex ('chemsex') and engaging in sex work are associated with HIV sexual risk behaviours.

**Methods:** By December 2017, 1395 participants in the Flux prospective cohort study provided six-monthly follow-up data and responded to questions about the exchange of sex for money or in-kind.

**Results:** Mean age was 34.1 years. At baseline, 7.9% had exchanged sex in the previous six months, including 5.2% for money and 3.9% for food, accommodation, clothing, or transport; a further 13.2% had engaged in sex work in the past and 67 men (4.8%) exchanged sex for the first time during follow-up.

Compared with the 1034 men (74.1%) who never exchanged sex, the 67 men who initiated sex work were more likely to be students (31.3% vs 17.4%; aOR=2.33; 95%CI 1.27-4.25). After controlling for other factors, neither age, nor mental health, nor sexual risk behaviors during previous survey rounds were associated with initiating sex work. Men who initiated sex work were more likely at follow-up to have used methamphetamine (27.3% vs 14.9%; p=0.021) and to have engaged in condomless anal intercourse with casual partners (54.5% vs 28.0%; p<0.001), including in the receptive position (45.5% vs 17.5%; p<0.001).

Men who initiated sex work were no more likely to use HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) than were men who never did sex work (20.7% vs 16.6%; p=0.256).

**Conclusion:** A minority of GBM exchanged sex for money or in-kind. Men who commenced sex work were often students and at follow-up were more likely to engage in behaviours that are eligibility criteria for access to PrEP. Further research is necessary to explore connections between initiating sex work, chemsex, and sexual risk behaviour among GBM, and the potential role of PrEP among GBM who engage in sex work.

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