

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBSTANCE USE SEX INDEX – A NEW TOOL FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE MEASUREMENT IN DRUG TREATMENT STUDIES

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Introduction / Issues:

Existing tools for measuring blood-borne virus and other sexually transmitted infection transmission risk behaviours in substance use interventions have not evolved alongside HIV treatment and prevention innovations, nor accounted for emerging sexual contexts of drug use such as “chemsex”/“party and play”. The Substance Use Sex Index (SUSI) seeks to address these issues.

Method / Approach:

Items for inclusion were identified from a review of the literature and consultation with experts. A 28-item questionnaire was piloted via an anonymous web survey. Concurrent and predictive validity were assessed against risk taking (RT-18) and sexual health testing items (Gay Community Periodical Survey). Qualitative feedback was also obtained.

Key Findings:

Complete responses were obtained from 199 individuals. Qualitative feedback identified challenges regarding conceptualisation of ‘risk’, especially in the context of current pre-exposure prophylaxis strategies for HIV. The scale was reduced to 9 items (condomless penile-vaginal/anal sex; unprotected oral sex; shared toy use; bloodplay; chemsex; trading sex for drugs; being ‘too out of it’ to protect self; injecting risk; group sex). Using factor analysis, these items met good fit criteria for a single scale. Significant, moderate magnitude, positive relationships were identified between total SUSI score and both RT-18 risk taking and sexual health testing.

Discussion and Conclusions:

Results support the conceptual basis for the instrument and highlight the need for community input. Further scale content refinement will be done with community partners to validate the tool and examine sensitivity to change.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

There are no conflicts of interest.