WEB-BASED HARM REDUCTION INTERVENTION FOR CHEMSEX IN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

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Background:
Men who have sex with men (MSM) engaged in chemsex are at heightened risk for risky sexual behaviors and increased rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This study marks the first randomized controlled trial assessing the impact of a web-based intervention on reducing chemsex-associated sexual risks among MSM.

Methods:
The study was a 2-arm, assessor-blinded, randomized, parallel-group trial conducted in Hong Kong with a 3-month follow-up period. Eligible participants were cis-male MSM aged 18 or older who had internet access and were proficient in Chinese. Grounded in the theory of planned behavior and a harm reduction framework, the intervention incorporated interactive elements and educational content on chemsex. Participants in the control group were provided with concise educational materials regarding sexual violence prevention. Study outcomes included intentions to engage in chemsex, actual chemsex activity, testing for HIV and other STIs, and instances of condomless anal sex within the last three months. We applied the intention-to-treat principle and used generalized linear mixed-effects models with logit links to analyze the outcomes.

Results:
A total of 316 participants were recruited and equally randomized into either the intervention (n=158) or control (n=158) groups. The intervention group showed a statistically significant reduction in chemsex engagement (time-by-group interaction: OR=0.23, $p < 0.001$), intentions to partake in chemsex (time-by-group interaction: OR=0.37, $p=0.009$), and occurrences of condomless anal intercourse (time-by-group interaction: OR=0.01, $p < 0.001$) over the last three months. This group also experienced a statistically significant increase in HIV testing (time-by-group interaction: OR=3.08, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion:
The findings indicate that a web-based intervention, grounded in harm reduction, can effectively decrease chemsex practices and condomless sex while enhancing HIV testing uptake among MSM. This suggests the potential for online interventions to play a critical role in mitigating the sexual health risks associated with chemsex.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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