

# CHARACTERISATION OF CHEMSEX IN PREP USERS IN FOUR HOSPITALS OF BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA



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## BACKGROUND:

The practice of chemsex consists of the intentional use of substances to increase activity or sexual pleasure. This practice could be associated with high-risk sexual behaviors that can increase the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as expose users to potentially severe adverse events related to the used drugs [1,2].

PrEP for HIV consists in the use of antiretroviral drugs to reduce the risk of infection. A history of having practiced chemsex was associated with a greater probability of having a diagnosis of STIs in PrEP users [3]. In Argentina there is limited information regarding this problem [4].

This research aims to measure the prevalence and characterize the practice of chemsex and STIs in PrEP users in four hospitals in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## METHODS AND MATERIAL:

This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study. The medical records and a self-administer questionnaire were used to obtain the information. Descriptive statistics and the  $\chi^2$  or the Mann-Whitney test were used to compare categorical and continuous variables, respectively.

## RESULTS:

From February to June 2024, **108 PrEP users were included**, the study is still enrolling and here we report preliminary results. The median age was 34 years (IQR 30-40). 94% identified as cisgender men.

The **median days in PrEP** and the **prevalence of STIs in the last year were**, for **chemsex users and not users** respectively: **628 (IQR 525-813) vs. 486 days (IQR 224-715) and 52 vs. 37 % (Table 1).**

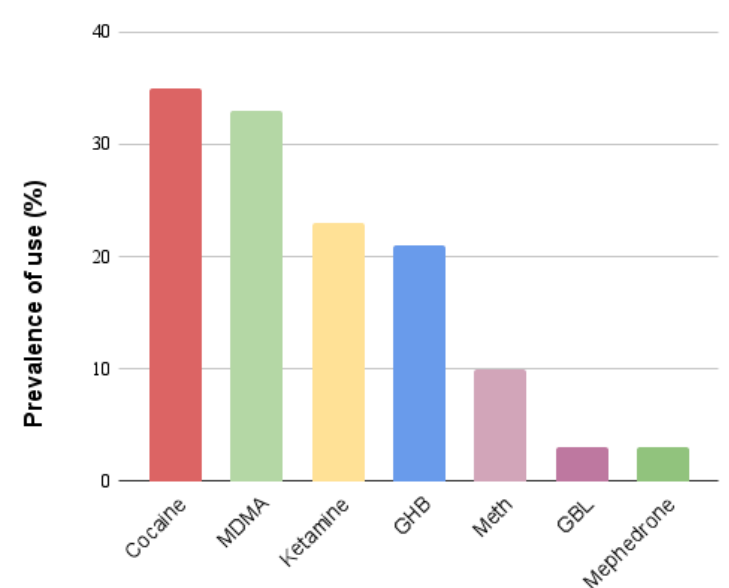
In the last 12 months, **53% practiced chemsex**, the drugs used were: cocaine, 35%; MDMA (ecstasy), 33%; ketamine, 23%;  $\gamma$ -hydroxybutyrate (GHB), 21%; Methamphetamine, 10%;  $\gamma$ -butyrolactone (GBL), 3% and mephedrone, 3% (Fig. 1).

**40%** reported **use of two or more drugs at the same time**, **21%** recognized chemsex as **a problem in their life**.

Table 1. Socio-demographic and clinical characteristics, overall and among chemsex users and non users. n = 108

	Chemsex users. n = 57 (53%)	Chemsex non users. n = 51 (47%)	p-value
Age in years, median (IQR)	34 (30-43)	33 (29-38)	-
Gender, n (%)			
• Cisgender men	54 (95)	48 (94)	
• Non-binary gender	1 (2)	0 (0)	-
• Cisgender women	2 (3)	2 (4)	
• Transgender woman	0 (0)	1 (2)	
Days in PrEP, median (IQR)	628 (525-813)	486 (224-715)	0.06
At least one STI in the last year, n (%)	29 (52 %)	19 (37 %)	0.13
Number of sexual partners in the last year, median (IQR)	20 (12-50)	20 (8-37)	-

Figure 1. Prevalence of drugs used in Chemsex practice. n = 57



## CONCLUSIONS:

We have identified a high prevalence of chemsex in PrEP users in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This highlights the need to take into consideration this topic in the development of PrEP and sexual health strategies.

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