Between chemsex and club drugs: drug use and health behavior among MSM in Germany. Results of a qualitative study.

**Background**
Currently, Germany is facing an increasing number of reports on drug consumption among men who have sex with men (MSM), the group that continues to represent the largest number of new HIV infections. Until now the German addiction aid system does not focus sufficiently on homosexuality. Moreover there is only small professional expertise by addiction therapists on life conditions, motives and the context of drug use among MSM, especially in sexual settings. On the basis of the syndemic approach by Singer (1996 & 2000) and the minority stress perspective (Meyer 2003) we conducted the first qualitative study in Germany on motives, health behavior and backgrounds of drug use by German MSM.

**Methods**
1. Systematic literature review on drug consumption among MSM. (Deimel et al. 2016)

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 14</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = 26 – 35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 = 36 – 45 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = 46 – 60 years</td>
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<td>12 = HIV+</td>
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The men reported many experiences with drugs. Especially with alcohol, nicotine, amyl nitrite, cocaine, crystal meth, amphetamine, ecstasy, THC, GHB/GBL and ketamine.

**Motives for drug consumption**

- **Sexuality**
  - Deeper sexual experience
  - Party
  - Problem solving
  - Other reasons

- **Disinhibition**
- **Erectile dysfunction**
- **Relaxation**

- **Sexual enhancement**
  - Ego dissolution
  - Pain medication
  - Live out own identity

- **Realise sexual fantasies**
  - Have fun
  - Increased self esteem
  - Social recognition

- **Erectile dysfunction**
  - Reduction of social fears
  - Earning money

Drug-using MSM are a relevant group for the German addiction aid system, in particular in cities with big MSM communities. There are many different motives for the drug consumption among MSM. We found relevant syndemic factors like HIV infections, experiences of discrimination and violence. Social workers and consultants of the addiction aid and HIV help services have to broaden their knowledge on these topics to meet the specific needs of the target group and to develop specific prevention strategies. Further training is essential to enable them to pursue a holistic approach that takes into account the overall wellbeing of MSM. Not least, further research on the living conditions of MSM who use drugs in Germany is needed, especially relating to sexual settings.

**Case study: drug consumption and sexual risks.**

“Once, I believe it was the first time that I took such a big dose of Crystal Meth. So there I was in a “Playroom” in Schöneberg where like, well you can rent it, and it’s for sex, like, with every possible toy and God knows what. So there I was for three days inside and I fucked everyone possible. [Interviewer: 3 days long?] Yeah. And I tried everything that I’d ever wanted to try and had never done: to protect myself like. But I’m still HIV Negative. I look crazy risks and then I ran away and thought: “Fuck, what was that?””

(Conference 2; 179-183)

**Case study: drug use and violence.**

“Well, it was actually possible to puncture my intestines with a toy. [...] Yes, too much bleeding plus not going directly to the hospital, and two hours later it was nearly all over, because the blood loss was simply too much.”

(Interview 7; 320-327)

**Case study: drugs in the nightlife community.**

“Well, I think it’s normal when you go out to get wasted. Totally normal.”

(Interview 1; 347)

“ [...] but I know that it’s easy [...] to quickly reach the topic of drugs and how to do them and maybe to go quickly with a complete stranger to the toilets to do a line as well. Because it fits the moment. You meet, you chat, you have a beer in your hand: “Hey, what do you fancy doing now? You look so wasted.” “Oh, yeah, blah blah… and then... come, I’m going to the toilets”

(Interview 12; 202 ff.)

**Conclusions**

References:

Project website: www.clubdrugstudy.wordpress.com