

## **Situations and associated factors of psychoactive substance use among men who have sex with men in Hong Kong**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study was to investigate: 1) Profiles of men who have sex with men (MSM) who are ever-users, current users, and at risk of psychoactive substance use, 2) Factors associated with psychoactive substance use in one's lifetime/last 12 months and behavioral intention to use it in the next 12 months, 3) Awareness of existing substance abuse prevention services and willingness and preferable sources to receive prevention information related to psychoactive substances, and 4) Issues related to service utilization among MSM who are ever/current-users and/or with intention to use psychoactive substances.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted. Participants were: 1) Hong Kong Chinese speaking men aged 18 years or above and had anal intercourse with at least one man in the last year. A total of 600 MSM were recruited by outreaching in gay-friendly venues, online recruitment and peer referral. With verbal informed consent, all participants completed a 30-minute telephone interview by a research assistant upon appointment.

Among all participants, the prevalence of using any types of psychoactive substances was 23.2% in lifetime and 16.8% in the last 12 months. Popper was the most commonly used psychoactive substance (17.8% in lifetime and 13.0% in the last 12 months), followed by Methamphetamine (8.0% in lifetime and 5.7% in the last 12 months) and G water (6.0% in lifetime and 5.0% in the last 12 months). Among all participants, only 5.4% intended to use any types of psychoactive substance in the next year.

History of HIV/sexually transmitted infections and presence of sexual risk behaviors (i.e., anal intercourse with non-regular male sex partners, condomless anal intercourse and multiple male sex partnerships) were associated with higher prevalence of psychoactive substance use in lifetime / in the last 12 months / intention to use it in the future 12 months. After adjusted for significant background variables, the following variables were associated with psychoactive substance use in lifetime / in the last 12 months / intention to use it in the future 12 months: a)

perceptions related to psychoactive substances based on the Theory of Planned Behaviors, b) frequency of exposing to information related to psychoactive substances on social media/gay social networking Apps, c) number of peers in one's social network who are ever/current users of psychoactive substances and frequency of being invited by regular sex partners/close friends/other friends to use such substances, and d) psychosocial variables (substance use coping style).

Among all participants, 46.7% were aware of drug cessation/rehabilitation services in Hong Kong; 51.7% were willing to receive prevention information related to psychoactive substances (e.g., types of substances, harms and addictiveness). Majority of the participants preferred Internet (62.5%) and non-governmental organization (54.7%) as sources to obtain such information.

Among MSM who are ever/current-users and/or with intention to use psychoactive substances (n=140), only 2.9% and 7.9% had ever used governmental and non-governmental drug cessation/rehabilitation services, respectively. The prevalence of behavioral intention to use governmental (1.4%) and non-governmental (3.6%) drug cessation/rehabilitation services in the next year was also very low. Major obstacles to use such services in Hong Kong included: a) concerns that others would know their privacy (55.0%), b) concerns that service providers are not familiar with MSM sub-culture (47.9%), c) inconvenience to go to facilities providing such services, and d) concerns about being stigmatized by service providers due to their MSM identity (42.1%).

Although psychoactive substance use was prevalent among local MSM, their utilization of drug cessation/rehabilitation services are very low. Use of psychoactive substances was associated with sexual risk behaviors and HIV/sexual transmitted infections. Effective interventions are warranted. Such interventions should consider perceptions, influence of social media and peers.