

# The counselors' perspective on the use of crystal meth in a sexual context among men who have sex with men

Valérie Aubut, Ph.D. student, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Jorge Flores-Aranda, Ph.D., Université du Québec à Montréal

Mathieu Goyette, Ph.D., Université de Sherbrooke

Maxime Blanchette, Ph.D. student, Université de Sherbrooke

# Disclosure of conflict of interest

---

- I have no conflict of interest

# Methamphetamine use among men who have sex with men (MSM)

---

- Methamphetamine use, especially crystal meth, among MSM is characterized by
  - Poly substances use, binge use
- Sexualised methamphetamine use is associated with risky behaviour
  - Multiple partners, injection of crystal meth, decreased of combined prevention interventions
- Observation by counselors of an increase of crystal meth use among MSM in Montréal

# Barriers to accessing services

---

- Many barriers to access
  - Lack of adapted tools
  - Lack of training
  - Fear of judgement, stigmatization
- Inadequate services
  - Non integrated services
  - Meth users don't identify with prevention messages and services
- Consequences
  - Severe substances use profiles
  - Difficulty of dissociating sexuality and substances use
- Mobilization of several actors involved in various projects on sexual health in Montreal
  - Creation of working table on crystal meth

# Context

---

- Goals of working table

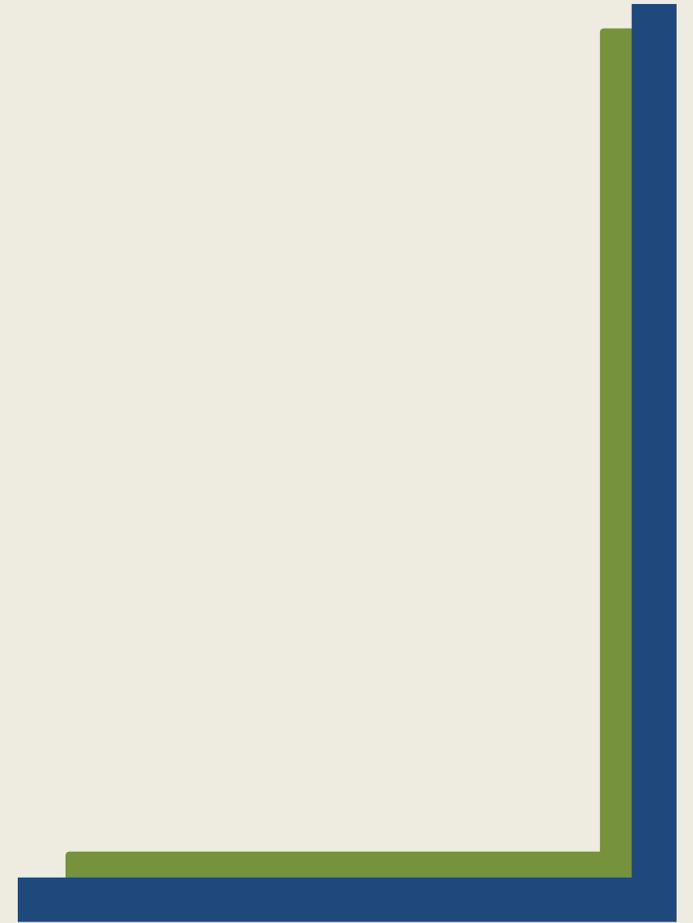
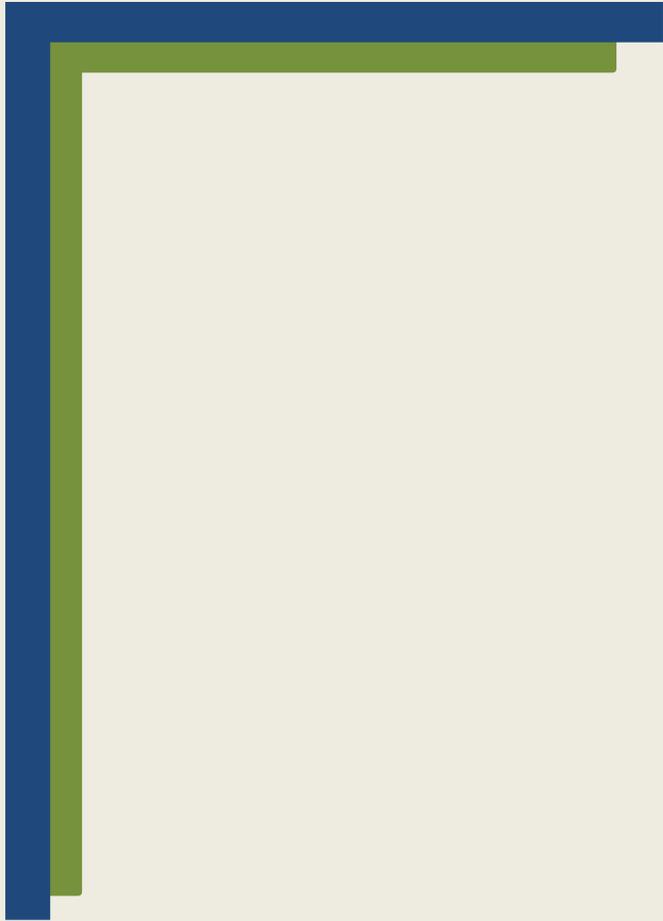
1. To gather principals actors concern by crystal meth use among MSM: researchers, counselors, managers, stakeholders and users.
2. To develop an update of the scientific literature around crystal meth, HIV risk, hepatites and other infections
3. To identify methamphetamine user's needs in Montreal and identify needs for harm reduction interventions (both in terms of methamphetamine use and sexual practices)
4. To develop projects based on evidences-based for crystal meth users and adapted to cultural reality in Montreal

# Method

---

- Focus group with counselors who work with MSM was recruited
  - N = 10
- Themes explored
  - Health services trajectories and crystal meth use
  - Services need for substance use
- Thematic analysis
  - On audio taped
  - Mixed analysis grided based on the research objectives and emerging themes

# Results



# Participants

		Counselors (n=8/10)
Field domain	Addiction	3
	Sexual Health	4
	Health care	2
	Mental health	2
	More than 1 field	2
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	2
	Between 1 and 5 years	3
	Between 5 and 10 years	2
	More than 10 years	1
Sexual orientation of clients	Heterosexual	2
	Gay	6
	Don't know	1
Integrated interventions	Yes	7
	No	1
Received a training in addiction	Yes	4

Main themes



# Counselors perception about crystal meth use

---

- Particular profiles
  - Particular sexual behaviours (ex. Bareback)
- Development of sexual identity around crystal meth
  - Substance use closely related to sexual activities
  - Sub cultural groups

*« Many users will have bareback sex relations and will go on app to search for this kind of relations » Int. 1*

*« They said it that they use to have sexual intercourses. »  
Int. 2*

*« They develop a sexual identity around crystal meth, so when we ask them to stop crystal, they return to social isolation, to a sexual practices they don't know anymore. »  
Int. 1*

- Lack of knowledge about the impacts of crystal meth by MSM who use it
- Non-recognition about the extent of crystal meth use among MSM
  - Desire to control their crystal meth use

*« There are some MSM who say that they control their crystal use, that when they want to stop they can... but it's not the reality. [...] My difficulty when MSM consult me, often they don't want to go further... if I want to refer them to services, they aren't ready for this. » Int. 3*

# Identified gap of services

---

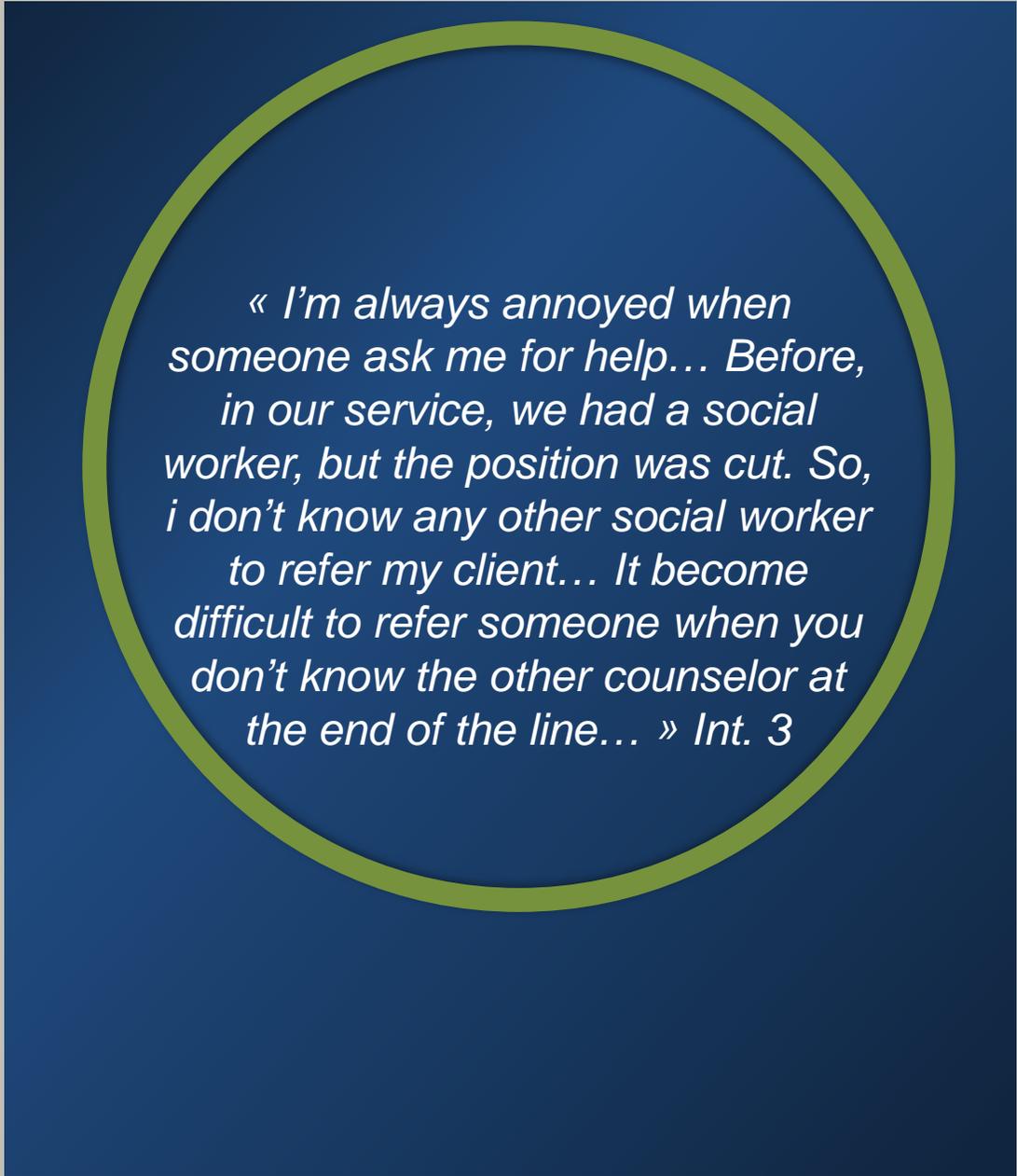
- Difficulty associated to public services care
  - Waiting list
- Lack of services diversity
  - Few services available
- Interventions modalities
  - Group or one-on-one
- Lack of adaptability of detection tools
  - Addiction
  - Sexual health

*« The GAIN can't specifically identify the crystal meth use that it includes in the category methamphetamine / amphetamine. So, if we are not aware of that, we will miss it. So, when I do my evaluation of social function, I go in other ways to have this information. [In fact, it's the counselor's sensibility that the crystal meth use in sexual context will address or not.] » Int. 1 et 4*

# Counselors needs identified

---

- Lack of train and qualified counselors in services
  - Social workers
  - Sex therapists
- Training/supervision, sensitization to the MSM reality
  - Crystal meth
  - Sexuality
- Knowledge on the others services
  - Services corridors
  - Decreasing of the feeling of isolation among counselors



*« I'm always annoyed when someone ask me for help... Before, in our service, we had a social worker, but the position was cut. So, i don't know any other social worker to refer my client... It become difficult to refer someone when you don't know the other counselor at the end of the line... » Int. 3*

# Discussion

---

- Different profiles of MSM (Anderson-Carpenter et al., 2019; Bourne et Weatherburn, 2018; Colyer et al., 2018)
- Help-seeking and services use later than sooner (Anderson-Carpenter et al., 2019; Bourne et Weatherburn, 2018; Colyer et al., 2018)
- Emphasis to adapt the interventions on the cultural reality of MSM (Bourne et Weatherburn, 2018; Scheim et al., 2019)
- Emphasis to adopt an integrated approach (Scheim et al., 2019)
  - Syndemic and harm reduction approaches
- Tools and interventions development
  - To support the counselors
  - To give to the MSM the choice of interventions and services
  - To better understand cultural reality of MSM (Bourne et Weatherburn, 2018; Flores-Aranda et al., 2019)

## Benefits

- Organization of a symposium with a delphi consultation
  - 12 experts around the world participated
  - Close to 80 counselors, deciders, researchers participated
- Training 101 on the sexualised substances use is developed by Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal

## What's next?

- Research proposal on the crystal meth use among MSM by our team with the collaboration of REZO in Montréal and MAX Ottawa
  - To ensure the validity of the tool Links SU-Sex

# Thank you

Questions ? / Comments / Discussion

[Valerie.aubut@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:Valerie.aubut@usherbrooke.ca)



- Blais, M., Otis, J., Lambert, G., Cox, J., & Haig, T. (2018). Consommation de substances en contexte sexuel chez des hommes gbHSH de Montréal : 2009-2016. *Drogues, Santé et Société*, 17(2), 76–94.
- Bränström, R., & Pachankis, J. E. (2018). Sexual orientation disparities in the co-occurrence of substance use and psychological distress: a national population-based study (2008–2015). *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 53(4), 403–412.
- Anderson-
- Card, K. G., Armstrong, H. L., Carter, A., Cui, Z., Wang, L., Zhu, J., ... Roth, E. A. (2018). A latent class analysis of substance use and culture among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 20(12), 1424–1439.
- Card, K. G., Hart, T. A., Aranda, J. F., Ortiz Nunez, R., Lachowsky, N. J., Salway, T., & Jolliore, J. (2019). *Améliorer les politiques liées à la consommation de substances pour les hommes gais , bisexuels et allosexuels (queers)*. Mémoire présenté au Comité permanent de la santé en vue de son étude sur la communauté LBGTQ2. *La santé au Canada*.
- Carpenter, K. D., Fletcher, J. B., Swendeman, D., & Reback, C. J. (2019). Associations between sociodemographic characteristics and substance use disorder severity among methamphetamine-using men who have sex with men. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 54(11), 1763–1773.
- Casey, B. (2019). *La santé des communauté LGBTQIA2 au Canada*. Rapport du Comité permanent de la santé.
- Colyer, S. P., Lachowsky, N. J., Cui, Z., Zhu, J., Armstrong, H. L., Taylor, M., ... Moore, D. M. (2018). HIV treatment optimism and crystal methamphetamine use and initiation among HIV-negative men who have sex with men in Vancouver, Canada: A longitudinal analysis. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 185(February), 67–74.
- Goyette, M., Flores-Aranda, J., Bertrand, K., Pronovost, F., Aubut, V., Ortiz, R., & Saint-Jacques, M. (2018). Links SU-Sex: development of a screening tool for health-risk sexual behaviours related to substance use among men who have sex with men. *Sexual Health*, 15(2), 160. Flores-Aranda, J., Goyette, M., Aubut, V., Blanchette, M., & Pronovost, F. (2019). Let's talk about chemsex and pleasure: the missing link in chemsex services. *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 19(3), 189–196.
- Lawn, W., Aldridge, A., Xia, R., & Winstock, A. R. (2019). Substance-Linked Sex in Heterosexual, Homosexual, and Bisexual Men and Women: An Online, Cross-Sectional “Global Drug Survey” Report. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 16(5), 721–732.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook*. (3th Editio). Arizona: Sage Publications.
- Paillé, P., & Mucchielli, A. (2016). *L'analyse qualitative en sciences humaines et sociales*. (4e édition). Montréal: Armand Collin.
- Scheim, A., Knight, R., Shulha, H., Nosova, E., Hayashi, K., Milloy, M.-J., ... DeBeck, K. (2019). Characterizing Men Who Have Sex with Men and Use Injection Drugs in Vancouver, Canada. *AIDS and Behavior*, (0123456789).
- Thomas, R. et al (2016) PrEP in Montreal: Good Adherence, No Seroconversion and No Evidence of Risk Compensation. CAHR 2016, communication orale. Code d'abstract : MD1.3
- Trottier et al. (2016) Le visage de l'hépatite C est-il en train de changer à Montréal? AFRAVIH 2016, communication orale, Code