

RECENT USE OF 'CAPSULES CONTENTS UNKNOWN' AMONG A SAMPLE OF PEOPLE WHO FREQUENTLY USE ECSTASY AND OTHER ILLICIT STIMULANTS IN AUSTRALIA

Georgia Kelly¹, Raimondo Bruno^{1,2}, Daisy Gibbs¹, Antonia Karlsson¹, Julia Uporova¹, Rachel Sutherland¹, Paul Dietze³, Caroline Salom⁴, Simon Lenton⁵, Louisa Degenhardt¹, Michael Farrell¹ And Amy Peacock¹

¹*National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia*

²*University of Tasmania, Hobart Australia*

³*Burnet Institute, Melbourne, Australia*

⁴*Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*

⁵*National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, Perth, Australia*

Presenter's email: georgia.kelly@unsw.edu.au

Introduction and aims: People who use illicit drugs rely on the people who supply these substances as a primary information source regarding the contents of the substance in the absence of drug checking facilities. We investigated the use of capsules with unknown contents, as well as demographic and health correlates of such use, among people who regularly use ecstasy.

Design and methods: Interviews were conducted from 2013-2018 in each capital city with people who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants. Participants reported recent (past six month) use of capsules with unknown contents (i.e., no information regarding likely contents). Binary logistic regression was used to identify factors associated with consumption of capsules contents unknown.

Results: In 2018, 18% reported recent use of capsules contents unknown, an increase from 7% in 2015. People reported using capsules contents unknown infrequently and most reported using one capsule in a typical session (fewer than when using ecstasy capsules). People who reported use of capsules contents unknown were more likely to be unemployed and have been arrested. They also reported greater past-month psychological distress and were more likely to report past-12 month non-fatal stimulant overdose.

Discussion and conclusions: Use of capsules contents unknown by a significant minority is of concern with the emergence of new psychoactive substances of unknown or higher potency relative to traditional illicit drugs. In the absence of information regarding contents, people may take precautionary measures to reduce risk, however these findings highlight the need for targeted harm reduction messaging to this population.

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