

What aspects of a drug checking service are important for Australians who use ecstasy?

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Introduction and Aims: Excellent models exist for drug checking services internationally, however, the Australian drug market differs substantially from other jurisdictions, particularly in relation to substance cost. We examined effects of different aspects of services on willingness of Australians to engage with drug checking.

Design and Methods: Internet study of 515 adult Australians that had used 'ecstasy' in the past year. We used a behavioural economic approach, examining the impact of different costs (financial, drug sample and time) on willingness to engage with a service. Two studies examined different service types: festival onsite services providing four differing levels of detail about drug (qualitative vs quantitative for MDMA only and/or for all drug components); service types (festival on-site, delayed city site, fixed site, mail service). The Health Beliefs model was included to understand correlates of service engagement.

Results: There were no significant differences in willingness to engage with any of the service types examined. However, willingness to engage was highly sensitive to costs, with service prices of \$14, drug samples of 40% of a pill, and for festival onsite services wait times of longer than 35 minutes reducing willingness to engage to 50%. Lower perceived barriers (e.g. embarrassment, confidentiality) and higher perceived benefit predicted greater willingness to engage but higher perceived susceptibility to harm from drugs was not significantly associated with engagement.

Discussions and Conclusions: People who consume ecstasy in Australia are enthusiastic about drug checking but this is highly sensitive to service cost. Health intervention campaigns should focus on highlighting service accessibility and benefits than potential harms from substance consumption.

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