

PATHWAYS TOWARDS DRUG CHECKING IN AUSTRALIA

PRESENTATION 4: Using triangulated survey and wastewater data to understand patterns of illicit drug use among Australian music festival attendees

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Introduction and Aims: Festival-based drug checking services provide an opportunity for the provision of information and education about potential risks of drug use. To assist in the development of fit-for-purpose drug checking services, this study uses triangulated survey and wastewater data to investigate patterns of drug use among attendees of a Queensland-based music festival.

Design and Methods: A cross-sectional survey focusing on patterns of illicit drug use and perceptions of drug checking services was administered to a convenience sample of 136 attendees of a Queensland-based music festival. Survey findings will be compared to drug residues detected in the festival's wastewater.

Results: Participants (52.9% male, median age 31 years, 72% heterosexual, 66% born in Australia) most commonly reported intending to use cannabis (34.6%), LSD (30.1%), ketamine (29.4%), cigarettes (25.0%), and MDMA crystals/powder (23.5%) at the festival; less common and novel drugs consumed will also be discussed and compared with results from wastewater analysis. 120 participants (88.2%) reported that they would use a drug checking service if it was available. Those who would not use the service reported that this was due to concerns about privacy (n=5) or getting in trouble with the police (n=7), or a lack of concern about the contents/purity/quality of drugs (n=3). Results from wastewater analyses will be presented.

Discussion and Conclusions: This study provides an increased understanding of drug use patterns, acceptance of and barriers to use of drug checking services among Australian music festival attendees. These findings can be used to develop effective festival-based drug checking services and guide future policies on festival safety and harm minimisation strategies.

Discussion Section: The aim of this symposium is to provide an update on the current state of drug checking services and research in Australia and potential pathways to drug checking in Queensland, and to facilitate a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of drug checking services and current drug checking methods, the current barriers to service implementation and how these can be overcome, and the necessary next steps to make drug checking a reality in Australia.

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