

KETAMINE USE AMONG PEOPLE WHO REGULARLY USE ILLICIT STIMULANTS IN AUSTRALIA: TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF USE

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Introduction & Aims: Ketamine is a dissociative anaesthetic used in medical practice. Since the first recorded non-medical use in mid-1960s, ketamine gained popularity as a recreational drug, with reports of dependence and dose-dependent harms (e.g., urinary symptoms) among regular consumers. In this paper we describe trends in recent ketamine use among a sample of people who regularly use stimulants in Australia along with characteristics of those who report recent use.

Methods: Data from the 2008-2018 national Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) were used to explore trends in lifetime and recent (i.e., within the last six months) ketamine use. Characteristics of those who reported recent use were examined in the 2018 EDRS dataset (N=799) using logistic regression.

Results: Lifetime ketamine use increased from 35% to 50%, and recent ketamine use from 12% to 35%, between 2008 and 2018. In bivariate analysis, recent ketamine use was associated with reporting bisexual orientation (OR=2.31; 95%CI=1.4-3.9), completing high school (OR=2.28; 95%CI=1.5-3.4), tertiary education (OR=1.78; 95%CI=1.2-2.7), poly-drug use (OR=12.97; 95%CI=4.0-41.8) and using stimulants for >48hrs in the six months prior to interview (OR=1.37; 95%CI=1.1-1.9). Those who were aged <20 years (OR=0.51; 95%CI=0.4-0.7) or >30 years (OR=0.51; 95%CI=0.3-0.9) were less likely to report ketamine use than those aged 20-30 years.

Discussion & Conclusion: We observed an increasing trend in reported lifetime and recent ketamine use over the previous decade in cross-sectional samples of people who regularly use stimulants in Australia. Recent ketamine use was more common among young adults and those reporting higher levels of education or a bisexual orientation.

Implications: Further research is required to explore consumer understanding of harms associated with high doses and regular use of ketamine, assisting in the dissemination of consumer education.

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