

HELP-SEEKING FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE BY AUSTRALIAN LESBIAN BISEXUAL AND QUEER WOMEN: DATA FROM THE SWASH SURVEY

Rm Deacon^{1,2}, J Mooney-Somers³

¹Drug and Alcohol Services, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

²Central Clinical School, Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney

³Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, The University of Sydney

Introduction and Aims: The SWASH survey has consistently found high use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs among Australian lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women. Here we present new data on the desire to reduce or quit use among LBQ women, and their use of treatment services.

Design and Methods: SWASH is a biennial cross-sectional community health and wellbeing survey targeting LBQ women attending Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras events in Sydney, Australia. Approximately 500-1000 women resident across Australia are recruited each iteration. In addition to substance use, in 2014 women were asked about their desire to reduce or quit alcohol and tobacco use, and in 2016 about use of drug and alcohol treatment services.

Results: In 2014, 1100 LBQ women aged between 16-66 years were recruited. Nearly half (48%) reported using illicit drugs in the previous 6 months and 30% were current smokers, including 48% of women aged <25 years. Two-thirds of women who drank consumed more than NHMRC guidelines for reducing lifetime risk of alcohol-related disease or injury.

Two-thirds (68%) of smokers and 26% of drinkers indicated they would like to reduce or quit their use. Women aged 25 years and over were significantly more likely to express a desire to quit than those aged 16-24 years.

Results on drug and alcohol service type usage will be presented at the APSAD conference.

Discussions and Conclusions: LBQ women in Australia report disproportionate use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs compared to the general population. There is a clear appetite among LBQ women to reduce use, suggesting a need for relevant cessation services.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Drug and alcohol treatment services will benefit from an overview of treatment need and types of services used by LBQ women, enabling them to better target their services to this population.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: SWASH has run since 1996 with no direct government funding through community enthusiasm, the goodwill of volunteers, in-kind support from the University of Sydney and University of New South Wales and limited financial from the National Centre in HIV Social Research and the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales. SWASH owes a deep debt of gratitude to ACON Health for continued financial and practical support.