

DRUG USE AND SEX: THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION IN SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOUR SURVEILLANCE AMONG GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

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Introduction / Issues OR Introduction and Aims: Using recreational drugs before or during sex is associated with increased sexual risk among gay and bisexual men (GBM) and is a focus in behavioural surveillance. We demonstrate the impact of changing drug use questions in a behavioural surveillance survey completed by GBM at a peer-led rapid HIV testing service in inner-city Melbourne, Australia.

Method / Approach OR Design and Methods: We analysed data from 2935 surveys completed during HIV testing by GBM reporting casual male anal sex partners between August 2013-October 2015. Drug use measurement changed in October 2014 from 'have you used party drugs for the purpose of sex' to 'have you used before or during sex' specific drugs (listed as methamphetamine, amyl, cannabis, Viagra, amphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, GHB, heroin). We describe self-reported drug use between surveys and their impact on time varying correlates of drug use in multivariate logistic regression.

Key Findings OR Results: Any self-reported drug use increased significantly from survey one (18%; n=270) to two (54%; 772) ($p<0.001$). Among GBM completing both survey versions (n=363) and reporting no drug use in survey one, 35% reported amyl, 12% Viagra and 11% cannabis use in survey two. In multivariate regressions, changes in drug use measurement moderated its relationship with age, condom use, group sex and partner turn over.

Discussions and Conclusions: Significantly more GBM reported drug use before or during sex when recalling specific substances. Results highlight GBM's subjectivity in classifying substances as 'drugs' in the context of sex, and the influence drug use measurement bias might have on research findings and their public health translation.

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