

Emerging Health Policy Research Conference 2019

Abstract Submission

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Presenters Details

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Short Biography of presenter (maximum 50 words):

Jared Brown is Co-Head of the NSW Poisons Information Centre and a UNSW Scientia PhD Scholar in the Medicines Policy Research Unit. He is an Advanced Practice Pharmacist in Toxicology. He works closely with regulatory and injury prevention stakeholders in toxicovigilance to translate research findings into practice.

Presentation Details

Presentation Title (up to 10 Words):

Getting over the blues from the rush on poppers

Keywords: (up to 5 to assist organisers in streaming papers):

Poisoning, epidemiology, drug abuse, medication safety

Research Details (250 word limit)

Introduction/Background:

Alkyl nitrite inhalants (eg amyl) have become commonly used recreational drugs, particularly among LGBTIQ+ communities to facilitate receptive anal intercourse (26-46% of gay men). It is also used more generally as a 'party drug', but not as a drug of choice.

Research Question:

To evaluate rates of use and harms from alkyl nitrite inhalants, and investigate risk factors for adverse events.

Methodology:

Harms will be evaluated from Australian Poisons Information Centre (PIC) alkyl nitrite case consultations 2009-18 and the NSW Public Health Rapid, Emergency, Disease and Syndromic Surveillance system 2011-18. Patterns of use will be evaluated through Australian drug use surveys such as Ecstasy and Related Drug Reporting System and Big Day Out Study.

Findings:

Usage appears to have remained relatively constant but significant increases in adverse events were noted with cases to PICs increasing from 28 to 78 over the past decade. Almost all cases were in adults, with an increasing trend in females, who now represent one-third. The majority of cases related to accidental ingestion of liquid followed by spilling of liquid into nostrils. Three-quarters were hospitalised but were rapidly discharged. ACT, NSW and Victoria had the highest population-adjusted rates of calls to PICs.

Policy Implications:

We hypothesise products available more recently are more: pure, toxic nitrites, poorly packaged/labelled; or the users (eg women, 'legal high') are inexperienced and at higher risk of toxicity due to incorrect use. A vigorous debate has been stimulated by this data, led by the Therapeutic Goods Administration considering education, rescheduling, changes in packaging and labelling.

N.B. All presenters will be asked to include a final slide in their presentations that summarises the policy recommendations and/or implications that can be drawn from the research presented.