

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS ILLICIT DRUG USE AMONG GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN IN AUSTRALIA: EVIDENCE FOR NORMALISATION?

T Lea<sup>1</sup>, M Hammoud<sup>2</sup>, F Jin<sup>2</sup>, L Degenhardt<sup>3</sup>, J Grierson<sup>4</sup>, B Mackie<sup>5</sup>, M Pastorelli<sup>5</sup>, C Batrouney<sup>6</sup>, N Bath<sup>7</sup>, J Bradley<sup>2</sup>, L Maher<sup>2</sup>, GP Prestage<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW, Sydney, NSW, <sup>2</sup>The Kirby Institute, UNSW, Sydney, NSW, <sup>3</sup>National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW, <sup>4</sup>Anglia Ruskin University, UK, <sup>5</sup>ACON, Sydney, NSW, <sup>6</sup>Victorian AIDS Council, Melbourne, VIC, <sup>7</sup>Harm Reduction and Viral Hepatitis Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, North Sydney, NSW

**Introduction and Aims:** Gay and bisexual men (GBM) report high rates of drug use, are often early adopters of new drug trends, and have distinctive drug use and sexual practices. Using the normalisation thesis, this paper will examine the acceptability and cultural accommodation of illicit drug use among GBM according to their patterns of drug use and engagement with gay culture.

**Design and Methods:** Data were sourced from the Flux study, the first online cohort study of illicit drug use among GBM in Australia. Baseline data were analysed from 2,251 participants using principal components analysis and multivariate linear and logistic regression.

**Results:** The mean age of participants was 33 years, 82% had ever used illicit drugs, and 51% had used drugs in the previous six months. More accepting attitudes towards drug use were associated with recent use and a stronger connection to gay community. While most men who had recently used 'party drugs' had accepting attitudes towards the use of these drugs (74%), only a minority of men who did not use party drugs reported accepting attitudes (22%). Irrespective of their own drug use patterns, participants were more accepting of some drugs (cannabis, ecstasy) and generally unaccepting of others (crystal meth, heroin).

**Discussions and Conclusions:** While illicit drug use was commonly reported among men in this study, the findings suggest heterogeneous attitudes towards drug use among GBM. These findings challenge commonly held assumptions that drug use is normalised among GBM and an unremarkable feature of gay sociality.

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