

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERVENTION AMONG MEN WHO USE PERFORMANCE AND IMAGE ENHANCING DRUGS (PIEDS)

B Larance¹, J Copeland¹, L Burns¹, J Holden¹, M Farrell¹ & L Degenhardt¹

¹ National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Australia, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Introduction and Aims: Use of performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) often occurs without medical supervision, and in amounts greatly exceeding recommended therapeutic doses. This study examines perceptions and utilisation of health services among a sample of men who use anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS) and other PIEDs.

Design and Methods: Cross-sectional study of 291 men who use PIEDs recruited through needle and syringe programs (NSPs), snowballing, and social media. The data were collected via interviews (face-to-face and phone) and self-complete surveys (paper and online).

Results: In addition to AAS, the sample commonly reported past year use of anti-oestrogens (61%), clenbuterol (32%) and stimulants such as ephedrine (61%). 82% reported lifetime illicit drug use, most commonly cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine. Risky drinking (AUDIT-C) was reported by 49%. Almost all (97%) reported at least one physical side effect arising from PIEDs use (51% reported >5 side effects); 42% reported (past year) 'abnormal test results'. In the past year, 88% had visited a GP, 22% sexual health clinic, 6% endocrinologist and 3% anti-ageing clinic. Injecting equipment was most often obtained from NSPs (56%) or community pharmacies (23%). The most commonly reported information source was online peer-led AAS forums (73%), but participants also reported needing improved access to specialist medical advice and treatment.

Discussion and Conclusions: Understanding the physical harms and risk profiles among people who use PIEDs, and the types of health services they currently access, has important implications for targeted interventions. Existing contact with primary healthcare services provides important opportunities for intervention.