

PERCEPTIONS OF 'ICE' AND THE 'WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON ICE' CAMPAIGN AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

M Lim^{1,2,3}, B Quinn^{1,2}, P Higgs^{1,2}, P Dietze^{1,2}

¹Burnet Institute, Melbourne, VIC, ²Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, ³University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria

Introduction and Aims: Responses to the purported 'ice epidemic' in Australia have included a federal government campaign, '*What are you doing on ice*;' which depicts users engaging in violent, criminal, and self-harming behaviours. This study assesses perceptions and knowledge of crystal methamphetamine (ice) among young people, focusing on beliefs about ice among people who reported ice use and people who recalled seeing the campaign.

Design and Methods: As part of the annual 'Sex, Drugs, and Rock'n'Roll' study, an online survey was advertised on Facebook to Victorians aged 15-29 years. Ten questions assessed perceptions of ice and five assessed opinions of the government campaign among those who recalled seeing it.

Results: 995 young people (median age: 22 years) completed the survey. Five percent reported lifetime, and one percent reported past month ice use. 72% recalled the campaign. Overall, 63% reported believing using ice once would lead to addiction, 71% reported believing ice had led to increased violence in society, and only 20% reported believing ice users could lead 'normal' lives. Corresponding values among people who reported lifetime ice use were 24%, 51%, and 40%. Only 21% overall, and only 12% of those reporting lifetime ice use reported believing the campaign would encourage help-seeking. 46% overall and 21% reporting lifetime ice use reported believing the campaign would prevent ice use.

Discussions and Conclusions: Inaccurate ice-related beliefs are prevalent among young Australians. The government campaign was not perceived as helpful, particularly by those who had used ice.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Current perceptions of ice use among a sample of young people do not reflect current evidence. A campaign which more realistically depicts the harms associated with ice use may be more effective at reaching people who have used ice.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: ML is supported by the Jim and Margaret Beever Fellowship. This study received no specific funding. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study. PD has received funding from Gilead Sciences Inc for work unrelated to this study. PD has received funding from Reckitt Benckiser for work unrelated to this study. PD is the recipient of an NHMRC Senior Research Fellowship.