

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO STEROID USE IN AUSTRALIA: RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL CONSULTATION

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Introduction: In recent years, several studies have suggested that the use of performance and image enhancing drugs via injection is increasing in Australia, with anabolic steroids appearing to be the most commonly used of these drugs. There are also claims that patterns of use are changing, with younger and CALD men increasingly consuming steroids.

Method: This paper reports findings from a national consultation with key stakeholders regarding the apparent rise of steroid use in Australia. These interviews explored the phenomenon of steroid use along with the contemporary landscape of research, policy and practice in the Australian context.

Key Findings: There is presently a lack of fit between research, policymaking and service provision in relation to steroid use in Australia. There is an appreciable risk of blood-borne virus (BBV) transmission among people who inject steroids, including hepatitis C. There is a need for more research into the harms associated with steroid use, including but not limited to the risk of BBV transmission, the minutiae of injecting practices among people who inject steroids; and knowledge of harms, including risks, associated with particular injecting practices.

Discussions and Conclusions: We consider the significance of these findings for future research. We argue that because little is known about the minutiae of steroid injecting in Australia and how transmission might occur, more research into the specificities of injecting practice is needed. This research should inform practice and policy, including targeted harm reduction practices for people who use steroids in Australia.

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