

## **Engagement with a fixed-site drug checking service in Canberra among people who use illicit drugs**

Jasmine Pearson<sup>1</sup>, Olivia Price<sup>2</sup>, Raimondo Bruno<sup>3,2</sup>, Rachel Sutherland<sup>2</sup>, Julia Uporova<sup>2</sup>, Caroline Salom<sup>4,2</sup>, Paul Dietze<sup>1,5</sup>, Simon Lenton<sup>5</sup>, Anna Olsen<sup>6\*</sup>, [Amy Peacock](#)<sup>2,3\*</sup>

*\*Joint senior author*

*<sup>1</sup>Burnet, Melbourne, Australia, <sup>2</sup>National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, <sup>3</sup>School of Psychology, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia, <sup>4</sup>Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, <sup>5</sup>National Drug Research Institute and enAble Institute, Curtin University, Perth, Australia, <sup>6</sup>School of Medicine and Psychology, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia*

Presenter's email: [Amy.Peacock@unsw.edu.au](mailto:Amy.Peacock@unsw.edu.au)

**Introduction:** Support for drug checking is well-documented among people who use illicit drugs, yet little is known about their engagement with fixed-site services in Australia. This study aimed to identify i) engagement with the Canberra fixed-site drug checking service, ii) reasons for and against accessing the service, and iii) characteristics of those accessing the service.

**Method:** Cross-sectional sentinel samples of people who regularly use illicit stimulants and people who regularly inject drugs residing in Canberra were recruited via peer referral, social media and needle-syringe programs. They completed interviews in April-July 2023 (100 and 101 people, respectively) and 2024 (100 and 100 people, respectively). Multivariable binary logistic regression was conducted to identify correlates of submitting a drug sample.

**Key Findings:** Across 2023/2024 samples, 26% of participants who use illicit stimulants and 19% of participants who inject drugs visited the CanTEST Health and Drug Checking Service in the past year; 19% and 15% had submitted a sample. Wanting to keep themselves safer was the primary reason for access among those who use illicit stimulants. Curiosity about the service and suspecting adulteration after consuming the drug were cited by those who inject drugs. Primary reasons for not accessing the service included trust in their dealer and not knowing the service had opened. People who inject drugs also reported that their use was too spontaneous to use the service. Selling drugs in the past month was associated with drug checking among both samples, as was methamphetamine as the main drug injected (versus heroin) among people who inject drugs.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** People who use illicit drugs in Canberra are accessing CanTEST to address concerns around adulteration and to reduce their risk of harm.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** There is opportunity to maximise awareness of the service and, more broadly, consider other models of service delivery tailored to the needs of different populations who use illicit drugs across Australia.

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