

The recreational use of natural health products and natural substances for psychoactive effects in New Zealand: a scoping review

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Introduction: Natural health products (NHPs) and natural substances, such as some species of plants and mushrooms, have been used for their psychoactive effects since prehistory. However, their patterns and prevalence of use in a contemporary context are not known. This scoping literature review aimed to map published literature documenting the recreational use of NHPs/natural substances for psychoactive effects in New Zealand (NZ).

Methods: Biomedical databases (Medline, Embase, AMED, PsycINFO) and grey literature sources (NZ government and relevant organisations' websites) were searched systematically from inception to August 2021. Original research studies reporting on the prevalence and/or exploring the recreational use of NHPs/natural substances for psychoactive effects in NZ were included.

Results: In total, 26 studies met inclusion criteria. Few studies specifically explored the use of NHPs/natural substances in this context. A range of NHPs/natural substances is used recreationally in NZ to obtain psychoactive effects. Hallucinogenic mushrooms and *Salvia divinorum* were the most frequently reported substances across all studies. Specific patterns of use were described among individuals from certain demographic backgrounds and age groups. Different data collection methods and unclear definitions of NHPs and substance use were used across studies.

Discussions and Conclusions: There is a limited number of studies/reports on the recreational use of NHPs/natural substances for psychoactive effects in NZ. Large, nationally representative studies are required to obtain comprehensive data on the prevalence and patterns of use of NHPs for psychoactive effects.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Many of these NHPs/natural substances are not regulated in New Zealand and are easily accessible. Changes in regulation may be required and/or the provision of information regarding harm reduction strategies.

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