

MSIC drug testing, a consumer led initiative

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Background: The Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre's (MSIC) Consumer Action Group (CAG) formed in 2015 in response to client lobbying for greater consumer involvement in the service. The CAG plays a key role in service decisions, including review of applications for research at MSIC. CAG routinely develop position statements on issues affecting community (including to influence drug policy) and have made submissions to the 2024 NSW Drug Summit, 2018 Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' and 2017 Victorian Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill.

This consumer-led presentation will discuss drug checking in NSW and highlight issues of relevance for people who inject drugs.

Intervention: Drug checking services (DCS) aim to reduce the risk of harms related to consuming illicit drugs. They analyse substances and provide results to consumers alongside targeted harm reduction advice. DCS empower people who use drugs to make informed decisions about their drug consumption, including the decision not to use, altering the quantity used, using in a supervised environment or with others, and sharing analysis results with other community members.

Acceptability/Implementation: The CAG has been integral in the implementation and promotion of drug checking and testing studies (using a range of technologies) conducted at MSIC. The recent introduction of drug checking at music festivals in NSW is a welcome outcome of the 2024 Drug Summit. Unfortunately, it does not address the harms for people who inject drugs, particularly important given an increasingly contaminated drug supply. We need to think flexibly about how to provide DCS to reach these communities.

Next Steps: Consumer involvement in DCS design and implementation is crucial to ensure services are accessible across communities. The CAG position statement on DCS will make a significant contribution.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Options for accessible interventions include using existing services such as NSPs and SIFs to deliver DCS.

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