

Patterns Of Purchasing Illicit Drugs From The Dark Net Among Regular Psychostimulant Users

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Introduction and Aims:

The rationale for purchasing from international and domestic vendors on the dark net may differ. This paper aims to examine motivations behind, and patterns of, purchasing illicit drugs from domestic versus international retailers in dark net marketplaces among psychostimulant users in Australia.

Design and Methods:

Data were obtained from the 2014-2017 Ecstasy-and-Related-Drugs Reporting System (EDRS), an annual national monitoring study aimed at detecting emerging trends in stimulant-related drug markets.

Results:

Recruitment for the 2017 EDRS is currently underway (to be completed by 30 June) and results are forthcoming. Results from the 2014-2016 EDRS show that while the number of psychostimulant users who purchased drugs from the dark net has remained relatively stable, the proportion of those who bought exclusively from Australian (rather than international) retailers has almost doubled (27.7% in 2014 to 56% in 2016; $p < 0.001$). In 2014, "less legal risk" was considered a positive of purchasing online among 44.4% of individuals who bought exclusively from Australian retailers, but considered a positive among only 22.2% of those who bought exclusively from international vendors.

Discussions and Conclusions:

Previously, country borders have not seemed to be a significant barrier to purchasing drugs online. An increase in users purchasing exclusively from Australian retailers may suggest that risk of being intercepted by authorities is an emerging perceived barrier to purchasing from international retailers.