Same Press, Different Contents: Using Police Seizure and Drug Checking Data to Inform Peer Health Messaging on MDMA tablets

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Note: Joint presentation by Janette and Clancy is proposed.

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Background: Tablets sparking drug health alerts are the tip of the iceberg among police seizures and drug checking data. Variability in contents and dose is key information for people who use drugs. Drug alerts are not always suitable to convey this information.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: NUAA (a peer-based drug user organisation) identified questions of interest to the community concerning MDMA tablets of similar appearance. Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAOD) combined data from drug checking and analysis of drugs seized by NSW Police to identify such tablets, and prepared information on contents, dose and adulterants. Among 15 MDMA tablets with dose markings, all contained less than the marked dose, but 7 contained a high dose (at least 140mg base). We also examined tablets included in previous NSW alerts, and tablets with origin stamps or branding features which are perceived as markers of quality. Messaging focuses on the range of doses in tablets presenting as MDMA, and the health implications for the set of drugs detected in tablets with similar appearances.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: NUAA and CAOD collaborate to develop public health messaging specific to each set of tablets. NUAA brings community knowledge of how tablet branding circulates, which questions matter most to people making decisions about use, and which framing will be taken seriously.

Conclusion and Next Steps: The wealth of surveillance data available to health departments, paired with peer organisation expertise, can inform ongoing health messaging beyond one-off alerts, providing high-quality health information relevant to people who use drugs.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities: This project models a collaboration applicable to other drug types and market trends. Health departments hold analytical capacity and surveillance data; peer organisations hold the community trust and communication channels needed to turn that data into messaging people engage with.

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No conflicts of interest declared.