

Breaking the Algorithm: Navigating a Stigmatised Digital Landscape to Make Values-Based Drug Messaging Go Viral and Drive Reform

Authors:

Alice Salomon¹, Brooke Porter²

¹Uniting NSW.ACT, Sydney, Australia. ²Uniting NSW.ACT - The Anti Stigma Project, Sydney, Australia.

Presenter's email: bporter@uniting.org

Background: As established in Outrage and Algorithms (International Journal of Drug Policy, 2023), illicit drug dependence is one of the most stigmatised health conditions worldwide. While digital platforms have revolutionised communication, their engagement strategies often trigger fear and amplify stigmatising messages through automated algorithms.

Description of Model of Care: We present a practical application of the 2023 "Outrage and Algorithms" framework. By "going consistently forward with love," we have developed a model of digital engagement that reaches people "beyond the bricks and mortar." This involves creating a digital "sanctuary" that is intentionally judgement-free, bypassing outrage metrics in favour of authentic, value-based connection.

Effectiveness / Acceptability: By applying the strategies of @TheAntiStigmaProject, we have successfully cultivated online community spaces that sustain open dialogue on substance use. This approach has proven effective in reaching populations often pushed into the "shadows" of the algorithm, maintaining high engagement without relying on stigmatising tropes.

Discussions and Conclusions: Love is a viable and protective digital strategy. By centering radical non-judgement, organisations can navigate hostile digital infrastructures while protecting the integrity of the stories they share.

Implications on communities, practice, policy: This model offers a roadmap for practitioners to maintain visibility and provide support in digital spaces where stigma is automated, ensuring drug law reform remains a human-centred priority.

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