

Disrupting Harm Reduction Delivery: Peer-Led Insights and Social Media Engagement through the PARTi Project

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Background:

Young people who use drugs in nightlife and festival settings often do not engage with traditional harm reduction services. These models may lack cultural relevance, feel clinical or stigmatising, and are not always trusted by people who use drugs. The Peer Advocacy Response and Training Initiative (PARTi Project) challenges these limitations by placing peer leadership and lived experience at the centre of harm reduction messaging, removing common barriers to engagement and access.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:

Delivered by Better Health Network and Thorne Harbour Health, the PARTi Project operates 'Sesh.ed'—a peer-developed and peer-led Instagram page that provides culturally appropriate non-judgemental harm reduction content without stigma. The platform shares state government drug alerts in communities who may not traditionally access government health websites and contributes a peer-voice to Victoria's Early Warning Network (EDNAV) who develop and issue the drug alerts. A peer-led program evaluation survey was designed and implemented to assess engagement and gather real-time insights from the drug-using community who access sesh.ed.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:

The survey collected over 400 anonymous responses from young people engaged in drug use in various settings including late-night venues and festivals. Analysis of the data shows patterns in drug use and how users access drug and harm reduction information. They showed a strong trust in peer-developed content, with respondents overwhelmingly reporting that they feel safer accessing information from programs run by peers with similar lived experience. Sesh.ed was widely seen as a credible and relatable source of harm reduction advice and respondents described how they routinely share the harm reduction messages through their networks including via family and friends. Users saw sesh.ed content as visually engaging, relevant, and written in a non-stigmatising manner.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

The PARTi Project illustrates how peer-led digital harm reduction messaging can increase engagement and safety within priority populations. The survey directly informs program evaluation for sesh.ed including types of content and expansion to more social media platforms.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

This model demonstrates that peer-led approaches increase trust, relevance, and uptake of harm reduction messaging among young people who use drugs.