

Club Drug Backgrounder: Emergency Department Study Findings

Patients between the ages of 15 through 30 who registered in the Emergency Departments of the UHN between 22:00 and 10:00 during June and July 2000 were surveyed. They were asked whether they had used Ecstasy (MDMA), GHB, Ketamine, or other drugs within the past 24 hours. This study was approved by the hospital research ethics board; participation was voluntary and all data kept confidential. Data was collected on 183 patients.

Results

10.4 % of the population reported using Ecstasy, GHB, or Ketamine within the past 24 hours.

19.1 % of the population reported having used Ecstasy, GHB, Ketamine or alcohol within the past 24 hours.

Polypharmacy (described as use of more than one drug in past 24 hours) was reported at least 50 % of the time. Ecstasy users reported use of another drug (including alcohol) 50 % of the time.

GHB users reported use of another drug (including alcohol) 90 % of the time

Arrival by ambulance was more prevalent among those reporting use of club drugs than those who did not. 78 % of GHB users, 42 % of Ecstasy users, and 46 % of ethanol users arrived by ambulance, compared with 17.5 % of the base population.

Those reporting use of GHB, MDMA (ecstasy) or were like to have attended the emergency department for reasons relating to substance abuse or physical injury.

Impressions:

The high incidence of use of several drugs, and / or combination of club drugs with alcohol suggests need for greater awareness regarding hazards of combining these drugs.

Club drug users and ethanol users tended to arrive more frequently by ambulance than the general population and to have longer stays than the general population. Arrival by paramedic and length of stay in the emergency department were viewed by the researcher as correlates of illness severity and emergency department resource utilization.

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