

The impact of positive and negative ecstasy-related information on ecstasy use among college students: Results of a longitudinal study

Author(s)

Vincent KB, Caldeira KM, O'Grady KE et al.

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Abstract

Aims: To: (1) estimate the proportion of students exposed to specific types of information regarding the positive and negative effects of ecstasy, (2) test models that quantified the relationship between exposure to these messages and subsequent ecstasy use, controlling for peer drug use and sensation-seeking. **Methods:** As part of the College Life Study, 447 students, aged 17-20 years, from a university in the mid-Atlantic region of the US completed an in person interview plus three follow-up assessments. **Findings:** Individuals who had heard a greater number of negative messages were significantly more likely to use ecstasy, even controlling for positive messages, prior ecstasy use, peer ecstasy use, perceived harm, sensation-seeking, sex and race. Some messages were significant at the bivariate level. **Conclusions:** Ecstasy use may have been influenced more by the content of the messages than by the quantity or diversity of messages. Interventions should be designed to address both positive and negative perceptions about a particular drug, rather than focusing exclusively on the negative information. Future evaluations should focus on the effectiveness of multi-pronged sustainable prevention programs in reducing adolescent drug use risk.

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