

Who is 'Molly'? MDMA adulterants by product name and the impact of harm-reduction services at raves

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Abstract

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), often sold as 'Ecstasy' or 'Molly', is commonly used at music festivals and reported to be responsible for an increase in deaths over the last decade. Ecstasy is often adulterated and contains compounds that increase morbidity and mortality. While users and clinicians commonly assume that products sold as Molly are less-adulterated MDMA products, this has not been tested. Additionally, while pill-testing services are sometimes available at raves, the assumption that these services decrease risky drug use has not been studied. This study analyzed data collected by the pill-testing organization, DanceSafe, from events across the United States from 2010 to 2015. Colorimetric reagent assays identified MDMA in only 60% of the 529 samples collected. No significant difference in the percentage of samples testing positive for MDMA was determined between Ecstasy and Molly. Individuals were significantly less likely to report intent to use a product if testing did not identify MDMA (relative risk (RR) = 0.56, $p = 0.01$). Results suggest that Molly is not a less-adulterated substance, and that pill-testing services are a legitimate harm-reduction service that decreases intent to consume potentially dangerous substances and may warrant consideration by legislators for legal protection. Future research should further examine the direct effects of pill-testing services and include more extensive pill-testing methods.

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