

A longitudinal study of behavioural outcomes following a visit to the Boom Festival 2018 drug checking service: individual and group level results

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Abstract

Drug checking services (DCS) allow people who use drugs to submit drug samples for chemical analysis and provide feedback of results and counseling. Our study tested the validity of behavioral intention measures against reports of actual behavior and the adoption of protective behavioral strategies. DCS patrons at Boom Festival 2018 completed three surveys during the festival (pre-drug analysis 343 participants submitted 671 drug samples, post-drug analysis 290 participants reported on 341 drug sample results, three-day follow-up 145 participants reported on 195 drug sample results) and another survey after six months ($n = 71$). At third-day follow-up, when the results were 'not the expected substance' ($N = 35$), 86% ($n = 30$) reported they 'didn't take the substance'; 11% ($n = 4$) 'took a smaller dose than initially planned' and only 3% ($n = 1$) 'took it as planned'. In 71% ($n = 63$) of the matched post-test and third-day follow-up answers ($N = 89$), the behavior reported at third-day matched the behavioral intention reported during post-test. After six months, there was a slight increase in most harm-reduction behaviors; however, there was a substantial drop-out among respondents. Results support the hypothesis that DCS promote the adoption of safer drug use practices; however, further research is needed to evaluate the medium- and long-term effects of DCS.

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