

Brief intervention for regular ecstasy (MDMA) users: Pilot randomized trial of a Check-up model

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Abstract

The prevalence of ecstasy (MDMA) use has increased significantly in recent years, particularly amongst young people. Despite the existence of a sizable population of regular ecstasy users and emergent evidence of a range of associated harms, including dependence, to date no effective targeted intervention responses have been reported specifically for this group. The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of a single session brief intervention in reducing ecstasy use and related problems among regular ecstasy users. In a randomized controlled trial conducted in Sydney, Australia, 50 adult ecstasy users were assigned to either a single session brief intervention or an assessment-only 3-month delayed treatment control condition. Primary outcome measures were days of ecstasy use and number of DSM-IV dependence symptoms reported. At 3-month follow-up significant differences were found in favour of the intervention group on measures of DSM-IV dependence symptoms reported and Severity of Dependence Scale score. No statistically significant differences were detected on measures of quantity and frequency of use.

While abstinence rates differed between groups by a factor of 4 (16% vs. 4%), this difference did not achieve statistical significance. Between group effect sizes at follow-up, all in favour of the intervention group, were moderate on the main outcome measures. The approach is acceptable to participants and merits further evaluation.

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