

Raves: A review of the culture, the drugs and the prevention of harm

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Abstract

Raves are all-night dance parties attended by large numbers of youth, sometimes in excess of 20 000. The rave scene, which is international in scope, is distinguished by clandestine venues, hypnotic electronic music and the liberal use of drugs such as ecstasy (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and ketamine. Several rave-related deaths in Canada in 1999 alerted health authorities, parents and police to the health risks of rave attendance. Family physicians, emergency physicians and pediatricians should have some understanding of raves, the drugs and the health risks so they can effectively counsel and treat patients. The rave culture in Canada and the drugs commonly used at raves are reviewed, and strategies and initiatives for harm reduction are discussed

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