

Biological markers of drug use in the club setting.

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Abstract

The prevalence of drug and alcohol use among patrons of clubs featuring electronic music dance events was determined by using biological assays at entrance and exit. Method: Using a portal methodology that randomly selects groups of patrons on arrival at clubs, oral assays for determining level and type of drug use and level of alcohol use were obtained anonymously. Patrons provided self-reported data on their personal characteristics. A total of 362 patrons were interviewed at entrance kind provided oral assay data, and 277 provided data at both entrance and exit. Results: Overall, one quarter of all patrons surveyed at entrance were positive for some type of drug use, Based on our exit sample, one quarter of the sample was positive at exit. Individual drugs most prevalent at entrance or exit included cocaine, marijuana, and amphetamines/stimulants. Only the amphetamine/stimulant category increased significantly from entrance to exit. Drug-using patrons arrive at the club already using drugs; few patrons arrive with no drug use and leave with detectable levels of drug use. Clubs vary widely in drug-user prevalence at entrance and exit, suggesting that both events and club policies and practices may attract different types of patrons. Approximately one half of the total entrance sample arrived with detectable alcohol use, and nearly one fifth arrived with an estimated blood alcohol concentration of .08 or greater. Based on our exit sample data, one third of patrons were intoxicated, and slightly less than one fifth were using both

drugs and alcohol at exit. Clubs attract a wide array of emerging adults, with both genders and all ethnicities well represented. Clubs also attract emerging adults who are not in college and who are working full time. Conclusions: At clubs featuring electronic music dance events, drug use and/or high levels of alcohol use were detected using biological assays from patrons at entrance and exit from the clubs. Thus, these clubs present a potentially important location for prevention strategies designed to reduce the risks associated with drug and alcohol use for young people. Combined substance use may prove particularly important for prevention efforts designed to increase safety at clubs. Personal characteristics do not identify drug users, suggesting that environmental strategies for club safety may offer more promise for promoting health and safety.

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