



BRIEF for Journalists

Our Vision: To support and educate young people, their families and communities to prevent the damage caused by drugs

Ecstasy itself causing most deaths

The website for The Australian carries a video “Why Australia should embrace pill testing.” <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/video/id-5348771529001-5790285624001/Why-Australia-should-embrace-pill-testing>

However, the accelerating number of Australian deaths from ecstasy are, according to the medical literature, mostly *not* from overdosing on MDMA, nor, according to coroners’ reports, are they due to impurities in party pills but rather from individual reactions to MDMA.

While drug legalisation/decriminalisation activists attempt to build the myth that normal amounts of MDMA are not life-threatening, just the opposite is the truth. According to our own Australian coroners’ reports our ecstasy deaths are mostly not due to unknown impurities but due to MDMA either by itself or in combination with other drugs <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19604654>. Nor is there a medical literature which supports frequent deaths due to ‘overdosing’ on MDMA. This fact is even recognised by the Soros-funded drug legalisation organisation, the Drug Policy Alliance https://www.drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/DPA_Fact_Sheet_MDMA.PDF and other drug legalisation activist organisations overseas <https://dancesafe.org/mdma-related-deaths-stop-calling-them-overdoses/>. It begs the question of why Australian activists are seeking to promote a myth that their own overseas allies do not.

Medical literature <http://bj.oxfordjournals.org/content/96/6/678.full> (see paragraph before Figure 1) records ecstasy users boasting MDMA blood levels more than 70 times the lowest levels associated with ecstasy deaths, and 4 times higher than the higher levels more typically found in ecstasy deaths. Even a Four Corners program <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/02/15/4404734.htm> which advocated for pill testing told of one user celebrating his 22nd birthday by taking 22 ecstasy tablets. Many deaths are from taking a single pill, and can be described as more akin to an idiosyncratic individual allergic reaction to MDMA, making first-time ecstasy use more akin to playing Russian roulette <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1365-2044.1993.tb06813.x>. A group of friends can all ingest the same amount but only one might die <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jul/22/friends-out-ecstasy-deaths-highest-level-pills>. This was precisely the case with Anna Wood, who took the same amount as her friends, but only she died.

Whether a tablet is 5% or 60% MDMA is much less important than what other drugs are being taken with it and what idiosyncratic physiological reaction an individual user will have to it. Rather than pill testing machines at the doors of RAVE concerts, heart and DNA testing machines might be more relevant, but even then, medicos are not entirely sure of all they should be physiologically testing for. If pill testing is pursued with government auspice the inevitable result will be more people willing to use the substance on the false assumption that they are now safe. With an increased population of users there will inevitably be more deaths.

According to the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey of around 25,000 Australians, most Australians (97%) do not approve the regular use of ecstasy.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/video/id-5348771529001-5836179651001/nsw-premier-explains-government-opposition-to-pill-testing-after-festival-drug-deaths>

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Note: Three deaths in Melbourne in January 2017 were due to other drugs 4-FA and 25C-NBOMe in ecstasy pills, but Victorian Police said that normal pill testing would not have helped. https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/3dp5pk/leaked-police-memo-reveals-what-was-in-melbournes-deadly-batch-of-mdma