

Drug Use and HIV Risk Behaviour in Three Urban South African Communities

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ABSTRACT The present study assesses drug usage and HIV risk using a modified version of the Drug Abuse Screening Test, Short Form (DAST-10) for substances other than alcohol among a sample of urban South African dwellers. Results indicate that the prevalence of (more than once) illicit drug use was 25% for cannabis, followed by methamphetamine (Tik) (7.3%), mandrax (5.4%), pills from the street (3.3%) and any drug injected by needle (1.2%). Nearly one in three urban dwellers showed symptoms of drug addiction over the past 12 months as indicated by scores on the DAST-10. Drug use in sexual contexts was related to HIV risks; the strongest predictors for HIV risk were cannabis use and sharing needles before sex, partner used cannabis and shared needles before sex and a high drug abuse score on the DAST-10. Based on the prevalence of drug use and its relation to HIV risk in these urban samples institutions such as health facilities are encouraged to provide screening opportunities to identify and to provide services for groups at high risk for drug abuse.