

Title:

Ceremonial Drug Use and Its Relationship to Recreational Drug Use: Results of a Pilot Study

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Session Title:

Risks of Plant-Based Drugs

Slot:

I 04: Monday, 30 October 2017: 3:45 PM-4:30 PM

Scheduled Time:

4:05 PM

Keywords:

Drug use, Ethnography and Harm reduction

References:

dos Santos, R.G., Osorio, F.L., Crippa, J.A.S, et al. (2016). Antidepressive, anxiolytic, and antiaddictive effects of ayahuasca, psilocybin and LSD: a systematic review of clinical trials published in the last 25 years. *Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology*, 6(3), 193-213.

Pollan, M. (2015). The trip treatment. *The New Yorker*, 2/9/15, accessed 9/1/2016
@ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/09/trip-treatment>

Prayag, G., Mura, P., Hall, M., & Fontaine, J. (2015). Drug or spirituality seekers? Consuming Ayahuasca. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 175-177.

Ribeiro Barbosa, P.C., Mizumoto, S. & Bogenschutz, M.P. (2012). Health Status of ayahasca users. *Drug Test and Analysis*, 4(7-8), 601-609.

Trichter, S. (2010). Ayahuasca beyond the amazon: the benefits and risks of spreading a tradition. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 42(2), 131-148.

Abstract Summary:

Ceremonial use of psychoactive/hallucinogenic drugs (including ayahuasca and psilocybin) is being reported in the lay literature. This presentation will review what is known about "plant medicine" and present the findings from a pilot ethnographic study looking at ceremonial drug use and how it relates to recreational drug use.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
Describe what is known to date about the historic and present day use of "plant medicine"	Review categories, traditional/modern uses and potential side effects of psychoactive plants
Discuss how study participant's view ceremonial drug use as compared to recreational drug use	Discuss: definitions of recreational vs. ceremonial drug use, reasons for using drugs recreationally vs. in ceremony, how experiences differ, and perceived risks/benefits of use

Discuss implications of ceremonial drug use for patient care including current patient health and future health risks

Discuss potential implications of plant medicine use for current and future patient health

Abstract Text:

Purpose:

There has been an explosion of articles in non-medical journals describing the surge in ceremonial use of psychoactive/hallucinogenic drugs (including ayahuasca and psilocybin) in the United States (U.S.) and globally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that self-formed groups are using “plant based”, “indigenous” drugs to promote physical and emotional healing. However, there has been little research documenting how many people are involved in this work, who the users are, what co-existing physical and mental health issues users may have, what benefits/risks exist in the use of these drugs and how ceremonial drug use encourages or discourages recreational drug use. This preliminary, qualitative study capitalized on a unique opportunity to investigate this emergent drug subculture. As part of larger study on ceremonial drug use, the purpose of this presentation is to explore study participant’s perspectives on how ceremonial drug use relates to recreational drug use.

Methods:

After approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB), this exploratory, qualitative study used a modified ethnography methodology to observe ceremonies and conduct individual, face to face or skype interviews with a convenience sample of 17 participants who are currently running and partaking in “plant medicine” ceremonies in the U.S. Inclusion criteria included age greater than 18, English speaking, currently running and participating in ceremonies in the U.S. Exclusion criteria included age less than 18, non-English speaking, and/or running or participating in countries other than the U.S. Descriptive content analysis was performed with the assistance of Atlas.Ti software to discover themes and to inform the research questions, conceptual framework and methodology for a larger mixed method study focusing on the perceived physiological, psychosocial, spiritual and behavioral risks and potential benefits of ceremonial drug use.

Results:

Participants in this study represent a diverse sample of plant medicine users. Salient themes emerged regarding the relationship of ceremonial drug use to past, present and potential future drug use. Participant’s uniformly described ceremonial drug use as “the opposite” of recreational drug use and recounted stories of ceremonial drug use healing past traumas, including drug and alcohol addiction. However, participants had conflicting beliefs about whether ceremonial drug use encourages or discourages recreational drug use.

Conclusion:

It is critical that nurses be aware of emergent drug cultures in order to effectively identify, educate and counsel patients. As the numbers of participants in ceremonial drug use continue to rapidly grow, more research is needed on pathways to membership in these communities, how and why people choose to participate and the relationship of ceremonial drug use to recreational drug use. Results from this study will be used to inform nursing education and the development of a larger mixed methods study.