



Background

Pill testing (also known as drug checking) involves members of the public voluntarily providing samples of any suspected illicit substances they are intending to consume (eg tablets, capsules, powders) for chemical analysis. Test results are provided back to the individuals by health professionals under strict protocols and as part of a personalised health and harm reduction intervention strategy. Testing is usually delivered in partnership with other services and can be provided at music festivals and other events and on an ongoing basis within fixed site community-based settings.

The consumption of drugs at music festivals and other events, many of which take place in rural and regional settings, is a well-recognised occurrence in Australia. It continues to occur in spite of measures to reduce its frequency including a strong police presence; the use of sniffer dogs; and random bag searches. It has already resulted in a number of deaths, incidences of overdose and other harm.

The purpose of the pill testing intervention is to increase the person's awareness of the contents of the substance they propose to consume and the associated risks. The ultimate aim is to affect behavioural changes that result in fewer harms or incidences of drug-related death. This does not replace the need for broader strategies to educate about the dangers of illicit drug use and reduce its incidence.

Pill testing is common practice internationally and there is a strong body of evidence regarding its effectiveness in changing behaviour through not consuming, or reducing consumption of, potentially dangerous drugs.

College policy position

ACRRM does not condone illicit drug use and maintains that further public prevention education is required to raise awareness about the consequences of drug use. However, the College acknowledges that the consumption of illicit substances at music festivals and other events continues to occur, sometimes with serious or even fatal consequences.

The College approach should be viewed in the context of harm minimisation and a commitment to saving lives, with recognition of an ongoing need for wider strategies to reduce illicit drug use more generally.

ACRRM supports pill testing where it is:

- Able to provide reliable evidence about the type and amount of substances and the risks and consequences of consumption;
- Recognised and employed as a harm prevention measure and as only one component of a comprehensive drug use prevention strategy;
- Employed in circumstances where evidence exists of its effectiveness and where it is safe and appropriate to do so;
- Implemented under strict monitoring protocols;
- Used in conjunction with other measures to restrict or reduce access to illicit drugs, including the provision of appropriate information about the dangers of illicit drug use;
- Associated with robust evaluation strategies and attention to generating and monitoring a strong and ongoing evidence base regarding its use.

Find out more

If you have any queries relating to this Position Statement, please contact us by:

Email: policy@acrrm.org.au

Phone: 1800 223 226

Website: mycollege.acrrm.org.au/contact-us



ACRRM acknowledges Australian Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islander People as the first inhabitants of the nation. We respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia in which our members and staff work and live, and pay respect to their Elders past present and future.