



**Using social media to
investigate young
people's drug use**

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Serendipity



Methods and analysis

- Sampling
- Thematic content analysis
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Coding



Findings

- **Young people were seeking information online**
 - Printed and televised media
 - Access to an abundance of unregulated information
 - Emergence of smartphones
 - Addition of online peers
 - Drug user as drug educator
- **Increased risk**



Benefits of using social media for drug research

- Novel way of looking at young people's drug behaviours
- Insight into where they obtain their drug knowledge
- Insight into how they construct their drug knowledge



Ethical implications

- Expectation of privacy vs. in the public domain
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- Vulnerable young people



Pitfalls of using social media

- Relatively new
- Bias
- Context
- Interpretation
- Lack of generalisability



Future research needed



- Tip of the iceberg
- Notion of online risk skewed towards grooming
- Not enough acknowledgement of drug harms

Drugs-Forum
the international drugs community

BLUELIGHT





Thank you!