

## **PARALLEL SESSION 1A**

### **Drugs, costs and consequences**

#### **Potential factors which may influence the development of "problematic" ecstasy use**

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Recreational ecstasy use has been repeatedly associated with psychological and cognitive problems. What remain unclear are the reasons why some users experience severe and enduring problems which they attribute to their ecstasy use, whilst others, who appear to have similar usage patterns, are relatively spared. We report here a series of studies comparing 'problematic' and 'non-problematic' ecstasy users, utilising scales to measure drug usage patterns, individual and family psychiatric history and self-reported levels psychopathology. A significantly greater number of 'problematic' ecstasy users reported pre-existing psychiatric histories and displayed consistently higher psychopathological symptoms compared to 'non-problematic' ecstasy users and polydrug controls across studies. Levels of ecstasy consumption and polydrug use varied between studies, but it appeared that the intensity of ecstasy dosing and the role other drug use, including hallucinogens and cannabis, appeared to contribute to higher psychopathological symptoms in problematic ecstasy users. A component model is presented to attempt to encompass these findings and other apparent inconsistencies in the literature, which suggest that the extent and nature of the development of problematic ecstasy use is more likely to be multi-factorial for most affected users. It is hypothesised that the more contributory factors that are present within an individual, the more likely that problematic ecstasy use will develop. Future research needs to address and understand the relative weighting and interaction of each factor within this model. It is proposed that this model may potentially help to highlight individuals that could be more 'at risk' of developing problematic effects, but also further inform harm reduction strategies.

# Potential factors which may influence the development of "problematic" ecstasy use

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## Background

- Elevated psychopathology compared to non-ecstasy users (e.g. Parrott et al, 2002)
- Develop to an extent that they become problematic to some users (e.g. Soar et al, 2006)
- Due to duration and consumption levels? (e.g. Parrott et al, 2002)
- However, Fox et al (2001): reported *psychological symptoms* in problematic ecstasy users were unrelated to ecstasy use

## Research Question?

*Why do some users experience severe and enduring problems which they attribute to their ecstasy, whilst others, with similar usage patterns, are relatively spared?*

### AIM

**To compare self-reported 'problematic' and 'non-problematic' ecstasy users**

- Drug usage
- Individual family & psychiatric histories
- Self-reported levels of psychopathology – BSI

## Participant Characteristics

	<b>Polydrug Controls</b>	<b>Non-problematic Ecstasy</b>	<b>Problematic Ecstasy</b>
<i>STUDY 1</i>			
N	20	20	14
Gender	12F / 8M	7F / 13M	6F / 8M
Age (years)	25	26	29*
<i>STUDY 2</i>			
N	62	62	53
Gender	35F / 27M	29F / 33M	28F / 25M
Age (years)	26	25	26

## Reported psychiatric and family psychiatric histories

	Participants			Immediate Family		
	Polydrug	Ecstasy	Problem	Polydrug	Ecstasy	Problem
<b>STUDY 1</b>	<b>n=5</b>	<b>n=6</b>	<b>n=11</b>	<b>n=10</b>	<b>n=10</b>	<b>n=7</b>
	<b>25%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>73%*</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>STUDY 2</b>	<b>n=14</b>	<b>n= 16</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>n=30</b>	<b>n=26</b>	<b>n=37</b>
	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>57%*</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>70%*</b>

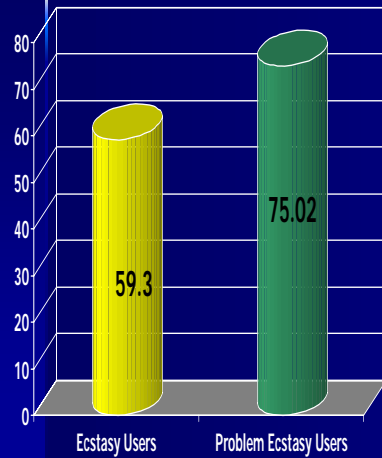
## Drug use

- Ecstasy users reported a greater use of drugs v polydrug controls
- 'Problematic' and 'non-problematic' only differed on monthly cannabis use (study 1) & hallucinogens (study 2)
- No significant differences in patterns of ecstasy use in study 1

## STUDY 2

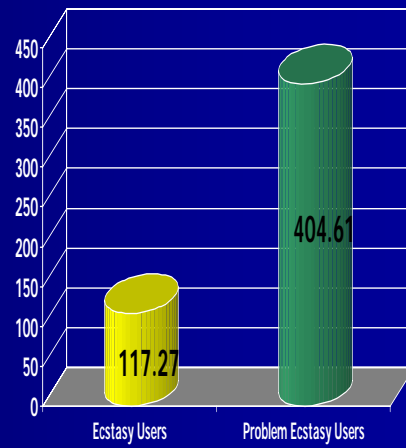
### Lifetime Consumption

[p=0.025]

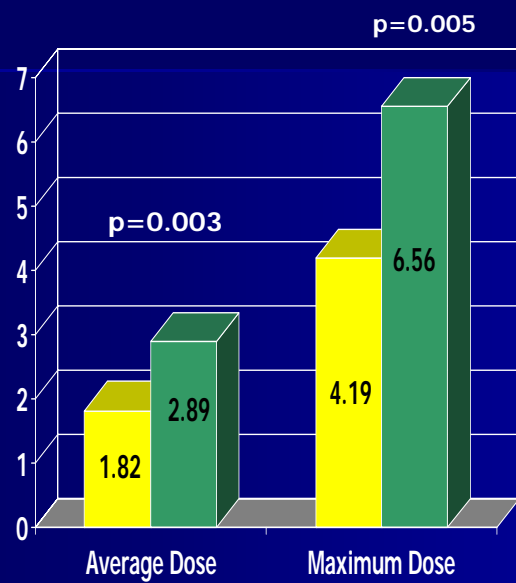


### Duration of Ecstasy Use (mths)

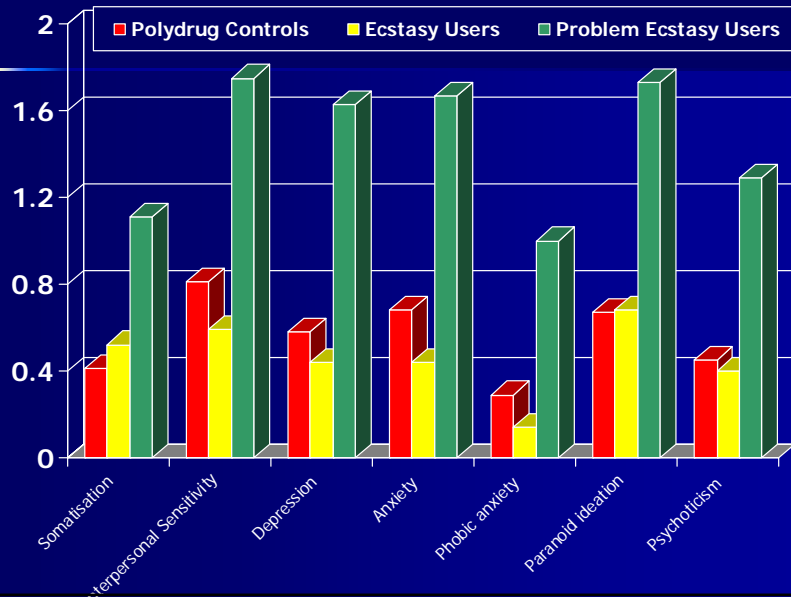
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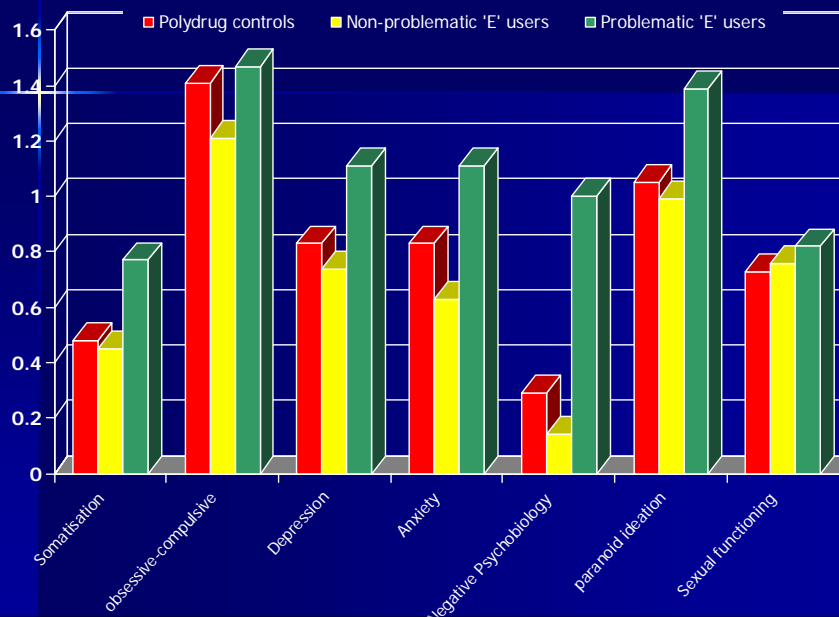
## STUDY 2



## STUDY 1: Psychopathology

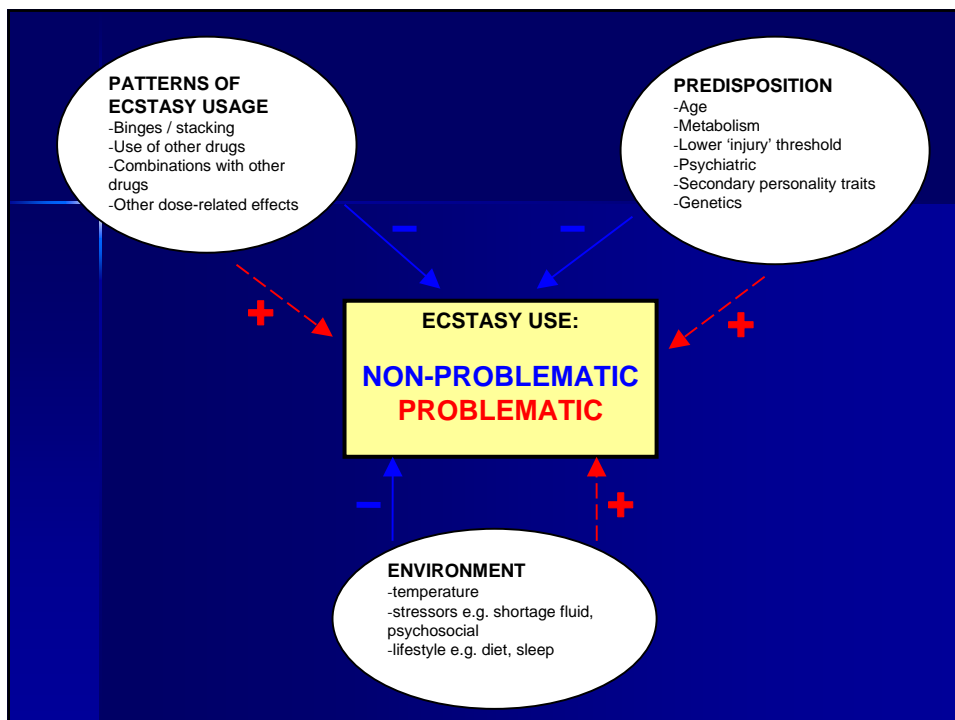


## STUDY 2: Psychopathology



# Summary of Results

- Ecstasy users appear to be self-selecting into two distinct groups, which differ in respect to their subjective awareness of problems attributable to ecstasy use (verified with psychological assessment)
- Compared to 'non-problematic' users, 'Problematic' ecstasy users reported a significantly greater number of pre-existing psychiatric histories
- Problematic ecstasy users showed a greater intensity of ecstasy dosing
- Role of other drugs such as hallucinogens and cannabis may contribute to problems



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