Exploring young women's pharmaceutical psychostimulant, alcohol, and other drug consumption

Australians are consuming stimulant medications at a rapidly increasing rate. Stimulant medications describe prescription drugs that stimulate the central nervous system and increase brain activity. In Australia, these include Aspen Dexamfetamine®, Ritalin®, Vyvanse®, Concerta®, and Modafinil®.

While women have historically been under-represented in stimulant medication treatment, they now make up the majority of adults receiving these prescriptions in Australia. Despite this change, there is limited understanding of how women experience stimulant medication use in everyday life and the social and cultural factors shaping these experiences.

There are also concerns that many stimulant medications are being used for non-prescribed purposes, including in combination with alcohol and other drugs. These practices are associated with increased risk of harm, yet little is known about how stimulant medications shape alcohol and other drug practices, nor how alcohol and other drugs shape stimulant medication use.

This project will involve in-depth interviews with young women who have recently used prescription stimulants, alcohol and other drugs. By analysing these interviews alongside an analysis of key clinical guidelines regarding the use and prescribing of stimulant medications, this study aims to improve understanding of:

- The social and cultural contexts of young women's stimulant medication use
- How stimulant medications intersect with alcohol and other drug practices
- How young women experience and make sense of these practices

Join the Study

This study is recruiting women aged 18-28 who:

- Are currently residing in Australia in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria
- Have used pharmaceutical psychostimulants in the past 12 months
- Have used alcohol and/or other drugs in the past 12 months

What's Involved?

If you are eligible and agree to join the study, we will make time with to complete an in-person or online interview. Online interviews will require using your camera and microphone in a quiet and private space. During the interview, we will ask you about your experiences and views regarding stimulant medications, alcohol and/or other drugs. The interview will take about 60 minutes, plus any travel time. The interview will be in English. We will give you a $70 digital Coles Myer Group card to thank you for your time and cover any expenses involved in taking part.

Express Your Interest

For more information, you can download our participant information and consent form here

To express your interest, you can follow this link or scan the QR code below to complete some brief questions to check your eligibility

For Further Information

For more information, please email H.Blackwell@ltu.edu.au

Research team

Dr Adrian Farrugia, Dr Dean Murphy, Hannah Blackwell, Professor Kate Seear

Ethics

HEC26031

The research is being carried out by the following researchers		
Role	**Name**	**Organisation**
Principal Investigator	Dr Adrian Farrugia	La Trobe University
Student Investigator	Hannah Blackwell	La Trobe University
Co-Investigator	Dr Dean Murphy	La Trobe University
Co-Investigator	Professor Kate Seear	Deakin University
Research funder	This study receives in-kind support from La Trobe University	

1. **What is the study about?**
   This research project aims to find out about young women's experiences of using stimulant medications, alcohol and other drugs in the past 12 months and how these might relate to a range of social dynamics such as gender and sexuality. Stimulant medications include prescription medications like dexamphetamine (Aspen Dexamfetamine®), methylphenidate (Ritalin®), lisdexamphetamine (Vyvanse®), extended-release methylphenidate (Concerta®), and Modafinil®. We are interested in learning about how young women use these medications in a range of ways, including following a prescription and not following a prescription. Stimulant medications are prescribed for a range of diagnoses, and you may also wish to reflect on these if they are relevant to *your personal experiences*.

   One thing to remember is that as researchers we are interested in *your* experiences and opinions. The number of women consuming stimulant medications in Australia has increased a lot in recent years. Some people think that this is a positive step, while others think that this may cause harm. Many women also report using stimulant medications in combination with alcohol and other drugs, but we don't know much about their experiences. We think that it's important to ask young women themselves about what they think about these issues.

2. **Do I have to participate?**
   Being part of this study is voluntary. If you want to be part of the study, we ask that you read the information below carefully. We are happy to answer any questions you have.

   You can read the information below and decide at the end if you want to participate. If you decide not to participate this won't affect your relationship with the researchers, La Trobe University or any other listed organisation.

3. **Who is being asked to participate?**
   You are invited to take part on the basis of your personal experience of stimulant medication, alcohol and/or other drug consumption in the past 12 months. Women currently residing in the Australian states of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland are eligible to participate.

   This study is interested in the experiences of people who have lived as women over the past 12 months who are aged 18-28. This includes trans women who have lived as a woman for the past 12 months. This does not include those who identify as non-binary or trans men, in recognition that these groups do not identify as women, and while their experiences may be shaped by previous experiences of living as a woman, this project is interested in the experiences of those who have lived as women in the past 12 months.

4. **What will I be asked to do?**
   If you decide to participate in this research, you must give us your 'consent'. This means that you have freely chosen to be involved and that you give us your permission to interview you. If you choose to give us your consent and participate, you will take part in a semi-structured interview of about one hour's duration. In-person interviews will audio recorded and will be conducted at the researcher's office in Bundoora or in interview rooms located in the La Trobe University City campus depending on your preference. For participants who are unable to attend in person, interviews will be conducted online via the online video conference platform Zoom and will be audio and video recorded. This will require having access to a laptop or computer that can support Zoom and its microphone and video functions, a stable internet connection, and a quiet and private space to complete the interview. Online interviews will require using your video and microphone throughout the interview.

The focus of the interview will be on your experiences of stimulant medication, alcohol or drug consumption and other related topics including gender, sexuality and diagnoses that stimulant medications may be prescribed for. Throughout the interview, you are welcome to clarify questions and their purpose.

If you are not comfortable answering any question you can refuse to do so. You can also withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences.

If you do choose to participate you will be compensated with a $70 digital Coles Myer Group gift card to cover your time and any expenses involved in taking part.

5. What are the benefits?

Your participation will allow you an opportunity to express your opinions and share your personal experiences concerning young women's stimulant medication, alcohol or drug consumption and other related topics including gender, sexuality and relevant diagnoses.

This research aims to benefit the broader community by improving understandings of the relationship between young women's stimulant medication use and alcohol and other drug consumption practices in Australia. Insights from this research can contribute to more relevant and effective information for those who consume these substances. Findings may also benefit researchers by identifying important avenues for future inquiry.

6. What are the risks?

With any study there are (1) risks we know about, (2) risks we don't know about and (3) risks we know about but don't expect. If you experience something that you aren't sure about, please contact us immediately so we can discuss the best way to manage your concerns.

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Dr Adrian Farrugia	Lead Investigator, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society	(03) 9479 5102	a.farrugia@latrobe.edu.au

Participating in an interview will involve reflecting on your personal opinions and experiences. This is expected to involve reflecting on health-related and potentially sensitive topics including alcohol and other drug use.

Some people may experience a level of discomfort or distress in response to reflecting upon and discussing these topics and relating their individual experiences. Before consenting to an interview, we encourage you to consider your capacity to discuss these topics and relate your experiences while maintaining your safety and wellbeing. During an interview, you are welcome to clarify questions and their purpose. *If you are not comfortable answering any question you can refuse to do so. You can also withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences.*

Some people may also be worried about disclosing information that they would not like others to know about them. To protect your identity and any information that you share, only the research team for this project will have access to the project's raw data. Following an interview, video recordings (online interviews only) will be destroyed. Audio recordings will be transcribed to an electronic transcript with all identifiable information removed and will then be destroyed. De-identified electronic transcripts will be kept in a password protected folder in a secure University server. Identifiable information collected for the purposes of screening your eligibility and contacting you will only be accessible to the research team and will be stored securely in a password protected folder in a secure University server separate from other data. This material will be kept for seven years after the research has been published and then destroyed. When reporting research findings, we will refer to you by a false name and remove any identifiable information so that there is little risk that your identity will be discovered through the research reporting process.

While this study does not aim to expose illegal activities, some people may be concerned about disclosing information that could expose illegal activities. You are not obliged to disclose information about illegal activities and if you are not comfortable answering any question you can refuse to do so. The researchers cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality with respect to illegal behaviour of which they are made aware. This means that your contribution to the

research would be disclosed outside the research team ONLY if the team was subpoenaed (asked by a court to provide evidence).

Please be aware that:

a. Researchers must not disclose patient or participant information unless legally required to do so. This requirement is included in section 141(2) of the Health Services Act 1988 (Vic) which states that information must be kept confidential, unless a specific statutory exception applies.

Before consenting to an interview, please consider the information that you want to share and seek legal advice if you have any concerns.

7. What will happen to information about me?

Identifiable information collected by this study for the purposes of checking your eligibility and being able to contact you, such as your name and post code, will only be accessible to the researchers and will be stored securely on a La Trobe University server for 7 years prior to being destroyed.

As we are recording contact information such as emails, we will **collect** information about you in ways that **will** reveal who you are.

We will **store** information about you in ways that **will not** reveal who you are.

We will **publish** information about you in ways that **will not** be identifiable in any type of publication from this study.

We will **keep** your information for seven years after the project is completed. After this time, we will destroy all of your data.

The storage, transfer and destruction of your data will be undertaken in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/.

The personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws, any health information collected will be handled in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic). Subject to any exceptions in relevant laws, you have the right to access and correct your personal information by contacting the research team.

8. Will I hear about the results of the study?

The outcomes of this research will contribute to a PhD thesis and may also contribute to academic journal articles and/or conference presentations. If you would like to be notified of the publishing of any research outputs, you can provide your consent and preferred contact email below.

9. What if I change my mind?

You can choose to no longer be part of this study at any time before or during an interview. You can also choose to withdraw your data within four weeks of completing an interview. You can let us know by:

1. Completing the 'Withdrawal of Consent Form' (provided at the end of this document);
2. Calling us; or
3. Emailing us

Your decision to withdraw at any point will **not** affect your relationship with La Trobe University or any other organisation listed.

When you withdraw, any information that you have provided, including the audio recorded interview, transcript and consent form will be withdrawn from the research study and will not contribute to any research analysis or outputs.

10. Who can I contact for questions or want more information?

If you would like to speak to us, please use the contact details below:

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Dr Adrian Farrugia, La Trobe University	Research Fellow	(03) 9479 5102	a.farrugia@latrobe.edu.au
Hannah Blackwell	Student Researcher	0483 648 171	H.Blackwell@latrobe.edu.au

11. What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about any part of this study, please contact:

Ethics Reference Number	Position	Telephone	Email
HEC26031	Senior Research Ethics Officer	(03) 9479 1443	humanethics@latrobe.edu.au

Consent Form – Declaration by Participant

I (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the participant information statement, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study, and I know that I can withdraw my contribution within four weeks of participating in an interview. I agree that information provided by me or with my permission during the project will contribute to a PhD thesis and may be included in presentations and published in journals on the condition that I cannot be identified.

☐ I would like to record my email address to receive published project findings upon completion of this project. I have provided my preferred contact details for this purpose below and ask that they only be used for this purpose and not stored with my information or for future contact.

Name	Email

Declaration by Researcher

☐ I have given a verbal explanation of the study, what it involves, and the risks and I believe the participant has understood;
☐ I am a person qualified to explain the study, the risks and answer questions

Researcher's printed name	
Researcher's signature	
Date	

* Participant consent must be audio recorded. The interview must sign and date their own signature

If this research has brought up upsetting memories or emotions, please contact the following organisations for support:

National support services

- **Lifeline:** 24/7 Crisis Support (www.lifeline.org.au) – Ph: 13 11 14; SMS: 0477 131 114 (All States and Territories)
- **BeyondBlue:** 24/7 Mental Wellbeing (https://www.beyondblue.org.au) – Ph: 1300 224 636 (all states and territories)
- **Medicare Mental Health:** Mental Health Support, Information and Resources (https://www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au) – Ph: 1800 595 212 (all states and territories)
- **Women's Information and Referral Exchange:** Generalist Information, Support and Referral Service for Women (www.wire.org.au) – Ph: 1300 134 130 (all states and territories)
- **QLife:** Counselling And Mental Health Support For LGBTQI+ Individuals (https://qlife.org.au) – Ph: 1800 184 527; Webchat (all states and territories)
- **Headspace:** Youth (15-25) Mental Health Support, Information and Treatment (https://headspace.org.au) – Ph: 1800 650 890 (all states and territories)
- **Aboriginal Counselling Services:** Counselling Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Ph 0410 539 905 (https://www.aboriginalcounsellingservices.com.au/ (all states and territories)
- **13YARN:** 24/7 Crisis Support With A Lifeline-Trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter (https://www.13yarn.org.au/about-us) – Ph: 13 92 76
- **National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline:** Alcohol And Drug Information and Support (https://www.health.gov.au/contacts/national-alcohol-and-other-drug-hotline?language=en) – Ph: 1800 250 015 (redirects to state/territory alcohol and drug support service)
- **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS):** 24/7 state/territory-based alcohol and drug counselling, information, referral and support
  - Ph: 1800 250 015 (NSW)
  - Ph: 1800 888 236 (VIC)
  - Ph: 1800 177 833 (QLD)

Withdrawal of Consent

I wish to withdraw my consent to participate in this study, including the withdrawal of my data from research analysis. I understand that withdrawal will not affect my relationship with La Trobe University of any other organisation or professionals listed in the Participant Information Statement.

I understand my information will be withdrawn as outlined below:

- ✓ Any identifiable information about me will be withdrawn from the study
- ✓ The researchers will withdraw my contact details so that I cannot be contacted by them in the future studies unless I have given separate consent for my details to be kept in a participant registry.
- ✓ My information can only be withdrawn within four weeks of completing an interview.

I would like my already collected and unanalysed data
☐ Destroyed and not used for any analysis

Participant Signature

Participant's printed name	
Participant's signature	
Date	

Please forward this form to:

CI Name	Dr Adrian Farrugia
Email	a.farrugia@latrobe.edu.au
Phone	(03) 9479 5102
Postal Address	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society La Trobe University Building NR6 Bundoora Victoria 3086 Australia