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Changes in method for obtaining better outcomes in the recruitment of synthetic drug users

Lysa Silveira Remy
Federal University of Rio Grande, Brazil

Objective: To describe the problems encountered and resolved in the course of using respondent-driven sampling (RDS), targeted canvassing (TARC), and ethnographic fieldwork (EFW) to recruit ecstasy and/or lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) users.

Method: This study is nested within a larger project designed to investigate the course of drug use, sexual risk behaviors, and psychiatric comorbidities in 240 ecstasy/LSD users. Eligible participants were males and females with ages ranging from 18 to 39 years, who reported ecstasy and/or LSD use at least once during the 90 days prior to interview and were not under treatment for drug and alcohol problems. Strategies were implemented sequentially, over four month time frames for each method, aiming at fulfilling study objectives.

Results: The final sample included 174 participants (64.36% males). Eight (4.6%) were selected using RDS, 26 (14.94%) with TARC, and 140 (80.45%) using EFW. RDS recruited participants with a higher education level, employed, and with a higher monthly income. Conversely, a higher frequency of drug usage and a higher number of drugs ever used were evident among participants selected via EFW.

Conclusions: Different recruitment techniques reached different types of participants. EFW showed the best performance, granting access to the largest number of participants and with a higher number of drugs ever used. Both RDS and TARC required more time to recruit participants and yielded a lower number of eligible subjects. Participants recruited via RDS had a higher socioeconomic level but also a shorter lifetime history of drug use.

lysaremy@gmail.com

Neurobiological substrate of reward: Implications for psychiatric disorders

Marc Fakhoury
University of Montreal, Canada

A dysfunction in the brain reward circuitry is implicated in several psychiatric disorders including drug abuse; alcohol dependence and depression. Previous work with psychophysically based studies suggests that destruction of the habenula which lies in the dorsal diencephalic conduction system (DDC) degrades the intracranial self-stimulation. In this work, we investigated the contribution of the dorsal diencephalic conduction system (DDC) in the brain reward circuitry. Rats were implanted with stimulating electrodes at the level of the dorsal raphe (DR) and the lateral hypothalamus (LH) and lesioning electrodes in the medial forebrain bundle (MFB) and the DDC. They were then trained daily to obtain an electrical stimulation at three different current intensities. Electrolytic lesions were made in the medial forebrain bundle (MFB) and the DDC and the reward induced by the stimulation was monitored daily for two weeks before and after the lesions. Results show that lesions of both the MFB and the DDC produce larger and longer-lasting attenuation in reward than lesions of either pathway alone. Moreover, the lesions had little appreciable effect on the rewarding nature of DR stimulation compared to when LH was stimulated. This study validates the existence of two parallel pathways that could constitute a viable route for the reward signal triggered by the electrical brain stimulation.

marc_fakhoury@hotmail.com