
ASHM 2008: Viagra – risk factor or safe sex aid?

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The use of Viagra (sildenafil citrate) and other sexuopharmaceuticals was the subject of a paper presented by Dr Martin Holt of the National Centre of HIV Social Research at the University of NSW. It described accounts from the QUICKIE study of thirty-one gay men in Sydney suggesting Viagra and similar drugs are seen as aids to safe sex, and that such drugs can offset erectile difficulties when using condoms.

Another study showed two in five HIV+ men used Viagra. Various reasons cited for using Viagra were: for treating undiagnosed erectile dysfunction, counteracting the effects of illicit drugs, enhancing performance, facilitating insertive sex, and/or guaranteeing masculinity. From that list a distinction between treatment – (correcting problems), and enhancement (improving the status quo) is shown.

Questions have been raised as to whether Viagra added to risky behaviour and a greater likelihood of unprotected sex. This study suggested that gay men were using it more to help with the use of condoms (and to avoid the embarrassment of losing an erection) rather than for unsafe sex, even with recreational drug use. Even so there were major educational implications in the use of these pharmaceuticals by gay men because of the relative ignorance of their interactions with other drugs and substances and because some men seemed to have normalised Viagra use to the extent that they could not have sex (and possibly safe sex) without it.

Holt M., Race K., and Bernard D., The Use of Sexuopharmaceuticals, National Centre in HIV Social Research, The University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney as presented at [ASHM](#) [1] Australasian Society for HIV Medicine. The peak Australasian organisation representing the medical and health sector in HIV/AIDS and related areas. Conference, 2008

- [Safe sex](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/382>