



EVIDENCE SHOWS PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE INEFFECTIVE IN REDUCING DRUG USE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Anti-drug public service announcements (PSAs) are one of the most popular anti-drug tools used by governments. In the United States, over \$1.3 billion USD has been spent on anti-drug PSAs since 1999.
- This study sought to determine whether scientific research conducted to date reveals whether these programs are effective in reducing rates of drug use and intention to use drugs.
- The authors scanned the scientific literature and evaluated all scientific studies that assessed intention to use illicit drugs and levels of illicit-drug use after exposure to PSAs, and analyzed these results.
- The authors identified eleven studies that assessed the effectiveness of anti-drug PSAs.

QUICK FACT

ANTI-DRUG PSAS ARE NOT EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING DRUG USE OR INTENTION TO USE DRUGS AMONG THEIR TARGET AUDIENCES, AND MAY ACTUALLY INCREASE THE INTENTION FOR SOME INDIVIDUALS.

FINDINGS

- Out of the studies in which participants were selected for PSA exposure, only one showed that PSAs significantly reduced intention to use illicit drugs, while two found evidence that PSAs significantly increased intention to use drugs.
- A meta-analysis of eligible studies demonstrated no significant effect overall.
- Observational studies showed evidence of both harmful (i.e., increased use) and beneficial effects.

IMPLICATIONS

- The scientific evidence conducted to date suggests that anti-drug PSAs are not effective in reducing drug use or intention to use drugs among their target audiences.
- Of concern, PSAs may actually increase the intention of some individuals to use drugs, which raises concern about the use of public tax dollars to support these initiatives.

Werb D, Mills EJ, DeBeck K, Kerr T, Montaner JS, Wood E. **The effectiveness of anti-illicit-drug public-service announcements: A systematic review and meta-analysis.** *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2011; 65(10): 834-840.

