

On the Net

Raving on the Internet

Few groups are as aware of the potential of the World Wide Web as Canada's computer-literate rave community (see pages 1843-8). The Internet's most predominant rave sites have grown out of the tight-knit communities within cities possessing a large rave subculture. These sites, which provide an important voice for individual ravers, often include discussion groups, party reviews that allow members to decide which rave promoters to avoid, and a strong sense of community. In Ottawa, Techno XVI (www.techno.xvi.com) is the dominant site, with more than 4000 members from across North America. In Toronto, Purerave (www.purerave.com) provides an immense contact list of ravers to supplement its discussion groups.

The online rave community is well aware of the drug use that exists at raves, as evidenced by harm-reduction groups based across the country. From Alberta's

Ravesafe group (www.freezingman.com/ravesafe/) to the Ottawa Association for Teaching Safety (www.oats.xvi.com), there are sites providing contacts for those wishing to help ensure the safety of ravers.



There are also several international harm-reduction sites, the most vocal of which are DanceSafe (www.dancesafe.org), an international site, and RaveSafe (www.ravesafe.org/home.htm), by a harm-reduction group in South Africa.

DanceSafe's site reflects its mission of educating ravers to the dangers of drug use. It provides information on specific drugs, their ingredients, their effects and the potential dangers they pose, including contraindications and precautions to take before choosing to drive home. DanceSafe maintains an open mind and tries to make the act of attending a rave as safe as possible.

RaveSafe's site is less thorough than DanceSafe's in providing information about ecstasy and other drugs, but it does have extensive testimonials from drug users that provide a revealing look at why people use (and continue to use) ecstasy. RaveSafe also provides an extensive and useful list of harm-reduction links (www.ravesafe.org/linx-harmreduction.htm), mainly articles in medical journals and documents provided by groups and associations with an interest in harm reduction. — *Greg Sullivan, Ottawa*

Raves worry Edmonton MDs, police

Like other Canadian cities, Edmonton is trying to deal with the fallout from the increasingly popular all-night parties known as raves. The city has 4 rave clubs and the events attract thousands of people every month. Nine people were taken to a hospital emergency room during the city's last big rave, and Constable Rick Abbott of the Edmonton police predicts that the city's first rave-related death may occur this year.

Dr. Gregg Scheirer, an emergency physician at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in downtown Edmonton, agrees. Scheirer saw his first rave patients this January, when 4 young people arrived in his ER within 3 hours. One person who had taken

the drug ecstasy ended up in the intensive care unit with cerebral edema. Following a rave in March, several people had seizures and one became hyperthermic and developed rhabdomyolysis. The main challenge, he says, is that the drugs produce different symptoms in different people. He is trying to educate other emergency physicians through rounds at the hospital.

The rave ideal is PLUR — peace, love, unity and respect — and ravers are quick to point to the lack of alcohol and violence at most events. However, ravers frequently use drugs such as ecstasy to achieve the heightened sensitivity needed to “see the music and hear the light.”

“Without ecstasy,” says Abbott, “there is no rave.”

The drug problem is compounded because of an upper middle class demographic, aged 13 and up, “that normally, probably wouldn't be found using hard drugs.”

He says idealistic ravers don't understand the increasing presence of drug dealers jockeying to control the flow of drugs at raves, and the growing potential for gang violence. “It's expensive to be a raver,” says Abbott, with one tablet of ecstasy costing about \$25. Abbott estimates that at least 50% of people attending raves take drugs; many smoke marijuana and do not take ecstasy.

The rave clubs are presenting police