Silk Road Project

You are invited to participate in a research project investigating previous use of the anonymous online marketplace, Silk Road. This page describes the project in straightforward language or ‘plain English’. Please read this page carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding to participate.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

Online drug marketplaces are fast becoming an integral part of wider illicit drug exchange networks. Understanding how this new way of obtaining drugs impacts upon buyers is critical if we are to better understand the current context of illicit drug use and harms. This project aims to understand use of online drug marketplaces from a buyer’s perspective, and focuses on previous experiences of using Silk Road.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

You will be able to add your voice anonymously to a research study which will be reported publicly. This study is unfunded and therefore cannot offer payment to participants.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you have ever bought drugs from the Silk Road, you will be invited to participate in an interview using encrypted instant messaging. The interview consists of open-ended questions about your experiences before, during and after buying drugs on Silk Road. The interview may take around two hours, especially if you have a lot to say. No identifying information will be collected.

What are the risks associated with participation?

The interview includes questions about illegal behaviour. To ensure there are no legal risks to you, we ask you not to disclose any specific information and we never report our results in ways that could potentially identify a participant.

The interview may prompt you to consider accessing treatment or information services. Appropriate referral information will be provided to you if required.

What will happen to the information I provide?

This project does not request that you provide any identifying information. You will therefore remain anonymous. The data also remains confidential; it will only be viewed by the investigators. The information you provide will be kept in a secure environment for at least five years. The privacy of the information you provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed if required by law.
Please note that if specific information is supplied on activities dangerous to the public, the researchers would be obliged to notify appropriate authorities. It is therefore important that you do not mention your full name, or the name of anybody else, in the interview.

The results of the research will be collated and analysed in reports, journal articles and conference presentations. Any potentially identifying information that you provide, such as names, pseudonyms, places or event names, will not be reported in these publications.

What are my rights as a participant?

Participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without consequences and the right to have any questions answered at any time. You can also choose not to answer any of the interview questions.

Contact information

This research is being conducted by Dr Monica Barratt, Dr Alexia Maddox, Prof Simon Lenton and Prof Matthew Allen. If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact Monica by email m.barratt@curtin.edu.au, phone +61407778938 or Twitter @monicabarratt. You can follow our progress at http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/research/silkroad

This study has been approved by the Curtin University Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number HR 26/2012). The Committee is comprised of members of the public, academics, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. Its main role is to protect participants. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to the Curtin University Research Ethics Committee, C/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845, Australia, or by telephoning +61 8 9266 2784 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

Consent

I confirm that:

- I have been informed about the procedure and understand the purposes of the study.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions relating to this study.
- I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that no identifying information will be collected.
- I am at least 18 years of age.