

Pop stars more than twice as likely to die an early death

September 4 2007

Rock and pop stars are more than twice as likely as the rest of the population to die an early death, and within a few years of becoming famous, reveals research published ahead of print in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

The findings are based on more than 1050 North American and European musicians and singers who shot to fame between 1956 and 1999.

All the musicians featured in the All Time Top 1000 albums, selected in 2000, and covering rock, punk, rap, R&B, electronica and new age genres.

How long the pop stars survived once they had achieved chart success and become famous was compared with the expected longevity of the general population, matched for age, sex, ethnicity and nationality, up to the end of 2005.

In all, 100 stars died between 1956 and 2005. The average age of death was 42 for North American stars and 35 for European stars.

Long term drug or alcohol problems accounted for more than one in four of the deaths.

When compared with the rest of the population in the UK and the US, rock and pop stars were around twice as likely to die early and even

more likely to do so within five years of becoming famous.

Some 25 years after achieving fame, European pop stars returned to the same levels of life expectancy as the rest of the population.

But North American stars continued to experience higher death rates.

The music business would do well to take the health risks of substance abuse and risk taking behaviours more seriously, say the authors.

This is not only because of the long term effects on the stars themselves, but also because of the influence these stars exert on others.

One in 10 children in the UK aspires to become a pop star, say the authors, and the droves of eager hopefuls applying to take part in series such as the “X Factor,” confirm the attractiveness of this career option.

“Public health consideration needs to be given to preventing music icons promoting health-damaging behaviour amongst their emulators and fans,” say the authors.

Stars could do more to actively promote positive health messages, but these need to be backed up by example, they add.

“Where pop star behaviour remains typified by risk taking and substance use, it is unlikely that young people will see any positive health messages they champion as credible,” they warn.

Source: BMJ Specialty Journals

Citation: Pop stars more than twice as likely to die an early death (2007, September 4) retrieved

10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-09-stars-die-early-death.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.