

New Doves, A New Legal High?

Sir

The Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney TD, declared 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP) a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 earlier this year. This has led to the increased availability of various other 'legal highs' and 'party pills' via the internet and over the counter in head shops. The National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) has received 18 enquiries regarding these 'legal highs' since then.

A product named London Underground 'Doves' was involved in two enquiries. The first enquiry was from an out of hours GP service regarding a 25 year old female who ingested two 'doves'. She had symptoms of dilated pupils, facial flushing and a tachycardia. She was referred to the nearest Emergency Department (ED). The second enquiry concerned a 37 year old male patient who presented to an ED having consumed one of these tablets and a Sildenafil tablet the previous night. This patient had symptoms of vomiting, abdominal pain, palpitations and chest pain. He was treated symptomatically. These 'Doves' are sold as plant feeder tablets and are marked 'not for human consumption'. We purchased a packet of these 'Dove' pills (Figure 1) in a head shop and forwarded it to The Forensic Science Laboratory, who confirmed the presence of butylone (bk-MBDB). We subsequently consulted TICTAC (a comprehensive CD-ROM database for the visual identification of drugs) and this database had description of a similar tablet containing the same chemical.

Figure 1: Dove tablets and packaging

Butylone is a -keto analogue of methylbenzodioxylbutanamine (MBDB), a psychedelic stimulant of the phenethylamine class. It has been reported as being used as a designer drug in other countries but there no reports of its abuse in Ireland to date. There is no existent data on the metabolism and toxicity of butylone. It is likely to have hallucinatory effects and cause stimulant effects on the central nervous system on the basis of its structural similarity to other hallucinogenic phenethylamines. It is interesting that a dove logo is imprinted on these 'legal high' pills as this logo is commonly used on illicit Ecstasy (MDMA) tablets. MBDB is a chemical derivative of MDMA.

any new designer drug on the market is always a cause of worry. We would encourage the reporting of any cases involving these 'party pills' to the NPIC so further toxicological and epidemiological data can be collected.

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