Introduction

Much attention has focused lately on the use of Head Shop compounds or Legal Highs among the general population. There is grave concern over the adverse effects of these new psychoactive substances (NPS). The use of these substances has been on the increase and the Drug Treatment Centre Board (DTCB) of the Department of Health, Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland are concerned at the possible implications of the use of these substances. Its available evidence indicates that these are emerging rapidly into the illegal drug market and there is a lack of knowledge about their effect on health and well-being. The DTCB has been monitoring the use of these compounds and the extent of their use has increased significantly over the past few years. This rise in the use of these substances has been accompanied by an increased incidence of adverse effects, including physical and mental health problems.

Methods

The aim of our study was to determine the chemical content of some of the Head Shop products and then determine the extent of their use amongst the drug using cohort at the DTCB. It is difficult to source certified reference standards for these various compounds and therefore it is apparent, because of the known pharmacological properties of the compounds under study, that the determination of these compounds was not possible from this analysis.

Results

The DTCB laboratory analysed 209 samples of urine for Methylone, Mephedrone and BZP by LC/MS. Of these 209 samples, 46 were from patients of the DTCB who had admitted to using Head Shop compounds or who were behaving erratically and therefore limits and delays the testing for these compounds. At the time of writing the Drug Treatment Centre Board Laboratory had managed to analyse 209 samples testing positive by LC/MS for Mephedrone and BZP.

Discussion

The substance nature of drug misuse noted previously is again evident in these results. All of the patients tested are methadone maintenance patients and many are currently being prescribed benzodiazepines. Co-abuse of head shop compounds with opiates is significant with 29 of the 52 tested positive for BZP. It is not known how long any of these compounds remain detectable in urine after a typical ingestion.

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11. Reference S. McNamara, S Stokes, N Coleman

Head Shop Compound abuse amongst attendees of The Drug Treatment Centre Board

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Abstract

The use of Head Shop compounds has received much media attention lately. There is very little research in the current literature with regard to the extent of their use in Ireland. We conducted a study to examine the extent of the usage of Mephedrone, Methylone and BZP amongst attendees of Methadone maintenance programs at the DTCB. Two hundred and nine samples in total were tested. The results showed significant usage of these compounds amongst this cohort of drug users, with 29 (13.9%) of samples tested positive for BZP, 7 (3.3%) positive for Methylone and 1 (0.5%) positive for BZP.

Discussion

It is not known how long any of these compounds remain detectable in urine after a typical ingestion. All of the samples tested positive for head shop compounds were tested for Opiates, Benzodiazepines and Cocaine by immunoassay. 21 (41%) of the 52 positive patients also abusing opiates. The Co-abuse of head shop compounds with opiates is significant with 29 (13.9%) of samples tested positive for BZP. The DTCB laboratory analysed 209 samples of urine for Methylone, Mephedrone and BZP by LC/MS. Of these 209 samples, 46 were from patients of the DTCB who had admitted to using Head Shop compounds or who were behaving erratically and therefore limits and delays the testing for these compounds. At the time of writing the Drug Treatment Centre Board Laboratory had managed to analyse 209 samples testing positive by LC/MS for Mephedrone and BZP.
Comments:

Head Shop Compound abuse amongst attendees of The Drug Treatment Centre Board