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Undesirable Effects of New Psychoactive Substances: Review of the Available Literature

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Introduction: In the last years, the number of new psychoactive substances (NPS) has been increasing exponentially. Since 2008, more than 300 NPS have been identified across the Europe¹. Despite the health risks of this emerging trend, there is limited information about the clinical manifestations of poisonings linked to the use of these substances.

Methods: A systematic literature search was performed in August 2014 using the following electronic databases: 'Pubmed' and 'Web of Science'. Were included original case studies describing a possible association between NPS use and physical health conditions.

Results: A total of 158 articles meeting the inclusion criteria for synthetic cannabinoids (CBs) (n=49), synthetic cathinones (SC) (n=64), 2C and D series derivatives (n=16), tryptamine derivatives (n=15) and piperazine derivatives (n=14) were included in this study. The majority of patients were adolescents or young adult men (median age 23 years). This analysis showed that the use of these substances may cause side effects on several organ systems similar to those of well-known traditional street drugs, including: psychiatric, neurological, cardiovascular, hepatic, thermoregulatory and even renal problems, which can even lead to significant morbidity and sometimes to death. In addition, atypical and more worsen complications were also observed.

Conclusion: Among the reported side effects of NPS, psychiatric disorders were the most described. Thus, this review summarizes the clinical manifestations of intoxications with NPS in order to inform health professionals about the most important risks of these products.

Références

¹ EMCDDA. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. 2013