



ECAD NEWSLETTER



EUROPEAN CITIES AGAINST DRUGS

www.ecad.net www.ecad.ru www.ecad.riga.lv www.ibt.gov.tr/ecad www.ecad.hit.bg/home.html

Volume 6 Nr. 121
July 2009

New Australian research: toxicology of cannabis

Albert Stuart Reece at the Medical School at the University of Queensland, Australia has recently published a paper on the chronic toxicology of the world's most abused illegal drug, namely cannabis. Systematic review of the recently published papers with a focus on certain search terms such as "cannabis", "toxicity", "complications" and "mechanisms" was narrowed to 5 198 papers.

The findings include close connection of chronic cannabis use to psychiatric, respiratory, and cardiovascular and bone effects. It also means the involvement of oncogenic, teratogenic and mutagenic effects, depending on the dose and the duration of cannabis use. Several studies from diverse cultures have confirmed the elevated risk of psychosis and schizophrenic spectrum disorders following high levels of cannabis use, particularly in cases of early start of cannabis consumption.

"Trivial" psychoneurological consequences of cannabis use are characterized as depressant, meaning that the use and withdrawal stage are accompanied by psychomotor agitation, implicating causally with violence. In a series of forensic examinations of suicide, cannabis use was associated with the most violent means of death.

Thoracic societies of Australia and New Zealand and the British Lung Foundation have recently acknowledged the detrimental effects of cannabis on the lungs. Cannabis smoke stimulates inflammation in the airways so that its long-term use is associated with the development of chronic bronchitis.

Cannabis smoke is also known to contain several potent carcinogens including anthrocyclines, nitrosamines, terpenes, vinyl chloride and other. As a consequence cannabis is associated with cancer of the lung.

Cannabinoid receptors are also present on bones. Physiological studies have shown that cannabinoids have an important role in the regulation of bone density; blocking or modulating CB1 cannabinoid activity protects from bone loss.

/READ MORE ON PAGE 2

★ NEW RESEARCH

G8 and Costa discussed drugs, terrorism and organized crime

At the recent G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, leaders expressed concern about the converging threats of terrorism, drugs and organized crime. The G8 leaders noted that 2009 marks the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the negotiations that led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo Convention.

They reaffirmed their determination to fully implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to "utilize its framework to prevent international criminal networks, kleptocrats and terrorists from corrupting public institutions to advance their criminal goals, as well as to strengthen international cooperation in fighting corruption, including through the return of assets".

In their declaration entitled **Responsible Leadership for a Sustainable Future**, the G8 leaders called on all States to ratify the Convention against Corruption and for "a strong and consistent follow-up to the Bali Conference by ensuring effective implementation of the Convention, including the development of an effective, transparent and inclusive review mechanism". They also said that they would **strengthen cooperation on asset recovery, including through the Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) initiative**, led jointly by UNODC and the World Bank.

Afghanistan and Pakistan were identified as a top priority for the G8. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to promoting stability and development in both countries and the wider region, for example by strengthening capacity to counter terrorism, trafficking and crime.

At the Trieste meeting, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa outlined the twin threats posed by opium and insurgency.

READ MORE on page 2



**ECAD and TALLINN CITY COUNCIL
INVITE YOU
TO THE CONFERENCE ON**



**METHODS, RESULTS AND EFFECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PRIMARY
PREVENTION PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



You can still register electronically!

Fill in registration form at

www.https://www.frens.info/site/tmpl/reg9_509.php

Registration fee : 50 EUR

Read more at www.ecad.net

Cannabis causing psychosis in healthy people

Researchers found that the "extent of psychotic reaction" was not related to "the degree of anxiety or cognitive impairment" among the men tested. The results appear to confirm a link between psychosis and skunk cannabis, which now accounts for 80 per cent of street seizures of the drug.

Scientists at the Institute of Psychiatry in King's College London made the discovery after running tests on 22 healthy men, aged in their late 20s. They injected them with THC - a major component of skunk cannabis which has been blamed for increasing psychosis among heavy users. By giving a dummy injection to some, and a dose of THC to others, the scientists were able to establish a link between THC and psychosis, in which hallucinations and delusions

leave sufferers unable to tell between the real and imagined.

The team, led by Dr Paul Morrison, concluded: "These findings confirm that THC can induce a transient acute psychological reaction in psychiatrically well individuals."

The researchers found that the "extent of psychotic reaction" was not related to "the degree of anxiety or cognitive impairment" in the men.

Mary Brett, vice president of Europe Against Drugs, said: "This shows that anyone who is healthy can become psychotic by smoking cannabis. They don't already have to have a mental illness. Healthy people can become psychotic."

Today's skunk cannabis also contains virtually no traces of another chemical, called CBD (cannabidiol), which appears to counteract the damaging effects of THC. The research is the first time that the dangers of skunk cannabis have been tested in the UK. Previous experiments have been run by experts in the US, Holland and Brazil.

Dr Morrison said the findings offered "additional evidence that can elicit temporary psychotic-like effects in

some people", but stopped short of suggesting they proved a direct link between psychosis and THC.

A Home Office spokesman said: "We have always been clear that cannabis is a harmful drug which should not be taken. Its use can lead to physical and psychological harms, and the mental health effects of cannabis use are real and significant. "We are taking comprehensive action to tackle cannabis use, from increased enforcement to reduce the supply, along with effective education and early intervention for those most at risk."

By Christopher Hope, source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/>

G8 and Costa discussed drugs, terrorism and organized crime

FROM PAGE 1

At the Trieste meeting, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa outlined the twin threats posed by opium and insurgency. He suggested that the most powerful instrument against those threats is development. He invited States members of the G8 and development institutions like the World Bank "to display in Afghanistan an economic power as forceful as NATO's military fire power".

There was considerable support for UNODC programmes in the region, including for the UNODC-brokered Triangular Initiative promoting cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan.

At L'Aquila, G8 leaders welcomed the conclusions achieved in Trieste with regard to closer regional cooperation in, among other areas, border management and trafficking in narcotics and weapons.

/By UNODC

- Every year Mexican cartels **smuggle illegal drugs worth about \$40 billion** (£24 billion) into the United States, the world's biggest market for narcotics. **Mexico is a major source of heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana** — and a key transit country for cocaine transport.

- In 2008, 6,000 people died in drug violence in Mexico, according to President Calderón — almost double the 3,042 deaths that were recorded in 2007

- About 95 per cent of the killings were carried out using firearms from the US. Most of the drug violence takes place in a few cities near the US border, with drugs and people being trafficked to the north, and weapons to the south.

/Sources: Reuters

New Australian research: toxicology of cannabis

FROM PAGE 1

Heavy cannabis use in humans is associated with substantial bone loss.

Not all studies in this field have confirmed the link between maternal cannabis use and later deleterious changes in the offspring. However, maternal cannabis use has been shown to reduce body weight at birth.

Maternal prenatal cannabis use has been found to predict later cannabis use during adolescence both as age of onset and frequency of use, a relationship that persisted after adjustment for many other risk factors.

Of great concern is the evidence of inheritable tumors such as childhood neuroblastoma, rhabdomyosarcoma and leukaemia in cannabis-exposed pregnant mothers.

Cannabinoids also block topoisomerase II, as enzyme that untwists and makes accessible the dominant coding DNA strand and plays a vital role in DNA repair, meiotic chromosomal replication and DNA hypermutation in prelymphocytes.

Source: ActNow.nu; [telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)

On Spice by EMCDDA



Picture: Actnow.nu

Smokable herbal mixtures under the brand name « Spice » are known to have been sold on the Internet and in various specialised shops since at least 2006 and reported to have effects similar to those of cannabis.

Towards the end of 2008 forensic investigations were undertaken by German and Austrian authorities in order to identify the psychoactive ingredients of Spice. On January 20, 2009 German forensic experts from the University of Freiburg and German Federal Criminal Police Office have also identified synthetic cannabinoid CP 47, 497 in Spice products. That is a cannabinoid receptor agonist with potency 3 to 28 times greater than THC.

In the first trimester of 2009 **two of EU member states, Denmark and the Netherlands informed EMCDDA about seizures of another synthetic cannabinoid from the JWH family.** This compound acts as (partial) agonist at CB1 and CB2 receptors and can be expected to produce cannabis-like effects. These relatively obscure substances are synthetic cannabinoids that are not internationally controlled as drugs and there is no information on any of them having been authorized as a medicinal product in the EU.

Spice products appear to be largely an Internet phenomenon. **The EMCDDA survey established that Spice products are available on national websites in two-thirds of the European Union member states.** Responding to potential health concerns, Austria, Germany, France, Luxemburg and Poland have taken legal actions to ban or otherwise control Spice products and related compounds.

The EMCDDA has been monitoring Spice products since 2008. Public interest in Spice products have resulted in a number of information requests to the EMCDDA.

During 2008 the Swedish Poison Information Centre had 51 inquiries, 40 of these originated from the health care system, physicians were treating patients who reported using Spice. Prompted by the lack of information, the Centre launched a short survey to collect some basic information on the availability of these products in the EU member states. Spice products were identified (meaning: were available in some way) in 21 of 30 participating countries. In Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia and the UK the availability and use of Spice are reported to be of concern. In Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden and the UK regulations are under consideration.

Among 115 investigated online shops, **48% of the retailers based in 14 different European countries offered Spice products for sale. The majority of the retailers was based in the UK, (53%), Romania, Ireland and Latvia.**

Google Insight shows that a substantial amount of searches were conducted on Spice products since the end of 2004. These have increased exponentially in the second part of 2008, with the majority of searches for "spice Gold" coming from the Russian Federation, Austria, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Germany and the UK.

Neither herbal ingredients of Spice, spice-like products nor any of the synthetic cannabinoids found in them are internationally controlled by the UN drug conventions.

However, albeit hot controlled, it appears that **most of the ingredients listed on the packaging are actually not present in the Spice products and it seems likely that the psychoactive affects reported are most probably due to added synthetic cannabinoids, which are not shown on the label.** Different combinations of these substances seem to have been used in different Spice products to produce cannabis-like effects.

/READ MORE ON PAGE 4

2009 marks the 25th year of US Asset Forfeiture Program

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces and Asset Forfeiture Program strategy recognizes that the most effective way to fight sophisticated criminal organizations is by leveraging the strengths, resources, and expertise of federal, state and local investigative and prosecutorial agencies.

The OCDETF Program does this through the formation of prosecutor-led, multi-agency task forces that successfully target drug traffickers through cutting edge, intelligence-based analysis and investigative work. OCDETF truly is the strategic centerpiece of the Department's counter-narcotics effort.

Since 1984, more than \$13 billion in net federal forfeiture proceeds have been deposited into the Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund. During this same period, more than \$4.5 billion has been equitably shared with more than 8,000 state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide, thereby supplementing their constrained resources without further taxing the public. Once left with no real opportunity to recover their losses, crime victims are now recouping greater sums than ever before.

Approximately \$500 million in payments have been paid to more 39,000 victims in fiscal year 2008 alone.

Remarks by Attorney General Eric Holder at the OCDETF Program's National Leadership Conference

REMINDER



ECAD

IN COOPERATION
WITH **SAN PATRIG-**

NANO COMMUNITY INVITE
YOU TO

SEMINAR WITH LECTURES
AND WORKSHOPS ON

**EVALUATING DRUG FREE
REHABILITATION**

OCTOBER 8-11, 2009

RIMINI, ITALY

YOU CAN SEND ECAD
YOUR REGISTRATION FORM
BY MAIL OR FAX
(FIND AT WWW.ECAD.NET)
READ MORE AT WWW.ECAD.NET

PARTICIPATION FEE: 50€



Israel: 10% of youth use drugs

Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch warned on Monday that the "drug problem in Israel poses a strategic existential threat on the Israeli society".

Speaking before the Knesset Committee on Drug Abuse, the minister presented data stating that **60,000 youths aged 12-18 use drugs – about 10% of the young population**. Aharonovitch said the **total number of drug users stands at 320,000**, and that these figures continue to rise. About five tons of heroin, four tons of cocaine and 3.5 tons of hashish are consumed each year in Israel.

The economic damage alone that stems from drug abuse stands at some NIS 7 billion (\$1.79 billion). "These are terrible numbers, but they are just the tip of the iceberg," the minister said.

In addition to the direct damage, Aharonovitch also discussed the damage caused by road accidents, and noted the rising wave in alcohol consumption, which he noticed during his tour of pubs around the country when he took office.

According to Aharonovitch, the PR campaign

"If you drink, you don't drive" is not penetrating the drivers' consciousness.

The minister stressed the difficulty in dealing with the drug problem due to the **breached borders with Lebanon and Egypt**. "The borders are not hermetically closed," he said.

"In Lebanon there is a fence and there are also successful attempts at catching drug smugglers, but the amounts that are actually smuggled are several times higher – and in this matter, the police only have assessments and not accurate data on the dimensions of the smuggling.

The border with Egypt is breached, not just for drug smuggling, and only with Jordan do we have cooperation between the Jordanian special forces and the Israeli units that reap good results," he continued.

The air and sea ports also serve as drug smuggling points, the minister said, adding that **Israel also serves as a drug smuggling passage point from South America and other locations**.

Source: actnow.nu/ <http://www.ynetnews.com>

135 heroin overdosed over a weekend in Moscow

In the middle of July, according to Russian news agency *Life.ru*, just over one week-end 135 Moscow inhabitants were hospitalized due to heroin overdose. Five of them died soon after that at different regional hospitals of Russian capital city.

Clinics usually provide sick addicts with heroin antidotes, so they followed the suit this time. Doctors assume, according to the agency, that a consignment of pure afghan heroin has recently reached Moscow. Deceased addicts were aged between 27 and 35.

/Source: Narkotiki.ru

Holland: drug tests in the army now?

98 soldiers serving in the Dutch army were made redundant last year due to drug abuse, according to Dutch agency *Nos*. The Dutch army that has a **zero-tolerance policy regarding drug abuse** considers now regular drug-testing.

/Source: Actnow.nu

On Spice by EMCDDA

FROM PAGE 3

There are hundreds of known compounds with cannabinoid receptor activity and it can be assumed that further such substances from different chemical groups will appear. This presents an ongoing challenge, not only for forensic and toxicological identification, but also for risk assessment and the development of possible control strategies.

Since the type and amount of added synthetic cannabinoids may vary considerably and some of the compounds may be active in very small doses, the possibility of accidental overdosing with a risk of severe psychiatric complications cannot be excluded. There is also a risk for emergence of a full CP receptor agonist, potentially leading to life-threatening conditions in case of overdose.

A question for the future is what sort of mechanisms are appropriate to monitoring the appearances of products such as Spice and assessing their possible impact? It appears likely that if these sorts of developments are to be detected at an early stage, a more proactive strategy may be necessary.



ECAD is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens.

ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.

Has your city joined ECAD?

ECAD Head Office

European Cities Against Drugs

ECAD, Stadshuset

105 35 Stockholm, Sweden

Tel. +46 850829363 Fax +46 850829466

E-mail: ecad@ecad.net www.ecad.net

Nearly 7 million Americans aged 18 to 25 were classified as needing treatment in the past year for alcohol or illicit drug use according to a new national study.

The study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) also shows that 93 % of these young adults did not receive the help they needed at a specialty treatment facility.

The study also showed that the vast majority (96 %) of young adults needing, but not receiving specialized treatment, did not perceive their need for help. Among the 4 % of young adults who thought they needed specialized help in the past year, but who had not received it – less than one third (32.2 %) made any attempt to get treatment.

ECAD Regional Office in Russia

www.ecad.ru

zazulin@ecad.ru

+7 812 328 96 65

ECAD Regional Office in Latvia

Tel. +371 6510591

www.ecad.riga.lv andrejs.vilks@rcc.lv

ECAD Regional Office in Bulgaria

www.ecad.hit.bg/home.html

doctor_ivo@abv.bg

+359 5 684 1391

ECAD Regional Office in Turkey

www.ibb.gov.tr/ecad ecad@ibb.gov.tr