

EMERGING HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH ILLICIT DRUG USE (3 MONTH REVIEW: April – June 2017)

DRUG GROUP	Drug/risk factor	Emerging Harm: source, number of reports, nature of harm	At-risk population(s)/ geographical area(s)	Sources, research, guidance
SEDATIVES/ DISSOCIATIVES	Heroin contaminated with fentanyl/ carfentanyl	<p>Post-mortem toxicology: Increased risk of fatal overdose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 drug related deaths in the UK were known to be linked to fentanyl or one of its analogues since December 2016 Source: post mortem toxicology results More fentanyl-related deaths likely to be identified through retrospective testing 	<p>Heroin users</p> <p>Majority of deaths identified in Yorkshire & Humber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert issued through NHS Central Alerting System, 27 April U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration 2017 Drug misuse and dependence UK guidelines on clinical management National Crime Agency report
	<p>Benzodiazepines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diazepam Alprazolam (Xanax) 	<p>RIDR: 3 reports of temporary speech loss reported with 'lighter blue, foreign' diazepam</p> <p>Wiltshire police: 20 young people hospitalised in May 2017 following consumption of alprazolam, often with alcohol</p>	<p>Young people</p> <p>Surrey, Hampshire and Wiltshire,</p>	<p>Wiltshire police report</p> <p>Drink & Drug News article</p>
SYNTHETIC CANNABINOID RECEPTOR AGONISTS (SCRAs)	SCRAs	<p>RIDR: In total 33 (38%) RIDR reports related to harms caused by SCRAs</p>		<p>AB-FUBINACA specifically connected with the somnolence symptoms of Spice intoxication – see “Zombie” Outbreak Caused by the Synthetic Cannabinoid AMB-FUBINACA in New York” (The New England Journal of Medicine)</p> <p>FEWS: Analysis of seized drugs: 20 prisons; 400 samples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67% drugs were NPS 99% of NPS were SCRAs <p>19 different types of SCRAs detected</p> <p>5F AKB-48 was the most detected drug (13% of samples)</p>
	<p>Spice</p> <p>Mamba/Black Mamba</p>	<p>RIDR: In the last three months there were 20 reports of harms attributed to Spice, including sedation/somnolence/loss of consciousness/unresponsive (9); increased heart rate (6); decrease oxygen saturation (3); dysarthria (motor speech disorder – 2); transient bilateral blindness (1); oculogyric crisis (1)</p> <p>RIDR: In the last three months there were 12 reports of harms attributed to ‘Mamba/Black Mamba’. Harms included Dysarthria (4); somnolence (2); loss of consciousness (2); disorientation (2); malaise (2)</p>	<p>Prisoners</p> <p>Street homeless</p> <p>North West England</p>	

EMERGING HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH ILLICIT DRUG USE (3 MONTH REVIEW: April – June 2017)

Drug group/drug/ risk factor		Emerging Harm: source, number of reports, nature of harm	Population(s)/ area(s)	Sources, research, guidance
STIMULANTS	Mephedrone	<p>Imperial College post-mortem toxicology study: mephedrone detected in 34 deaths in 2015, a 55% increase from 2014 (n=22), making mephedrone deaths comparable to the number of MDMA deaths (n=28 in 2015).</p> <p>ONS Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning, England and Wales: a significant reduction in mephedrone deaths is recorded from 44 in 2015 to 15 in 2016</p>	3 distinct groups: IV heroin users; men who have sex with men; recreational users	The Lancet, Volume 387, Issue 10029, 23–29 April 2016, Pages 1719-1720 ScienceDirect summary of Lancet article ONS data
	HALLUCINOGENS: Nothing reported this quarter			
OTHER DRUGS	Poppers/amyl nitrites	<p>BJ Ophthalmology: 12 male patients presented to Sussex Eye Hospital 2013-2016 with poppers-related retinal damage, no specific treatment identified in the study - some users describe resolution of symptoms on cessation of use.</p> <p>Global Drug Survey 2017: 1322 reported last-year use of poppers. When asked if they thought poppers had affected their eyesight 29 (2.2%) said yes; 130 (10.0%) thought maybe and 1146 (87.8%) thought not. 17 people did not answer.</p>	Men who have sex with men	British Journal of Ophthalmology Global Drug Survey in BMJ Open Ophthalmology
	DNP (2,4-dinitrophenol) (slimming drug)	RIDR: 1 fatal overdose; tonic clonic seizures	Young women	

Prevalence Stats (prevalence stats and treatment stats which remain relatively constant)

<p>European Drug Report 2017 (EMCDDA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCRAs have biggest share of NPS in European drugs market • Cathinones have second biggest share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Survey for England and Wales drug misuse findings – latest reports a fall in NPS use • NDTMS annual treatment statistics reports: Adults; Young people; Prisons
--	--

Clinical advice/updates

Treat acute presentations based on symptoms, as chemical makeup can vary so much between brands and NPS names. NPIS [Toxbase](#) is the most useful resource in these situations. [Project NEPTUNE](#) provides guidance on the clinical management of acute and chronic harms of club drugs and NPS.

Where possible, background information from/about the patient is important for clinical assessment: people may have taken more than one illicit drug, or may have taken NPS in conjunction with other medication. Knowing all the substances the patient has taken is important because of the possibility of interactions.

Mental health clinicians need to consider discussing NPS use with their patients, and the possible impact this may have on their mental health.

Drug treatment staff can use transferable skills in dealing with longer term issues within broad drug categories as above (sedatives/dissociatives; stimulants, hallucinogens, cannabinoids). For more details, see PHE's [NPS toolkit for substance misuse commissioners](#) and [NPS in Prisons – a toolkit for prison staff](#)