



SDF
Scottish Drugs
Forum

Informing
Supporting
Representing
Leading

NPS in Scotland – Health Impacts

What do we know?

April 2013

A national resource of expertise on drug issues

www.sdf.org.uk
www.scottishdrugservices.com

NPS in Scotland – Health Impacts

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Typical A&E Presentation

- Self-presentation
- Brought by friends / family / concerned others/ the police
- Concerned by symptoms and/or extraordinary behaviour or 'incident'.

Reported symptoms on presentation stimulant/dissociative/ empathogen overdose

- Overstimulation
- Confusion – paranoia, anxiety (sometimes provoked by physical symptom)
- Hallucination - possibly visual and/or auditory
- Cardiac arrhythmia
- Control of body temperature

Acute Settings

Overdose –

- Treated symptomatically on advice of the CMO
- Reassurance, benzodiazepines, ice
- Many need no medical treatment
- Admission to hospital is very unusual

Mental health presentation

- Possibly after prolonged or heavy use of either stimulants etc. or synthetic cannabinoids
- Self-presentation / brought by friends / family / concerned others/ the police
- Either patients rests and eats and recovers or develop mental health issues
- Difficult to prove causal link. Complex issue

But remember...

No systematic data collection on -

- people presenting to A&E who have used drugs / are UTI (note: motivation for patients not to disclose accurate info)
- people presenting to A&E with drug-related problems

No systematic recording of these issues

We are dependent on the personal and professional interest of a few key staff in Scotland... or on a major incident.

Hidden populations of concern?

Binge drinkers

People taking 'any white powder' stimulant and using it to assist their alcohol consumption.

“It’s great – you can drink as much as you like and keep going”

Hidden populations of concern?

Younger polydrug users

- Not presenting at drug services but perhaps very obvious in others
- Involved in polydrug use – alcohol, benzodiazepines, stimulants / cannabis
- Are we identifying and supporting this group?
- What will become of them?

Hidden populations of concern?

Problem drug users

- Reports of heroin users injecting stimulants
- Reports of people using needle exchanges with unusual injecting wounds (injecting stimulants?)
- Reports of people in recovery using legal highs 'because they are not drugs'

Health impacts of long term use

- Unknown
- Possibly similar to the drugs they imitate
- Should not be speculated on imagined / exaggerated as a prevention measure

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Find drug services in your area:

www.scottishdrugservices.com

Hepatitis Scotland

www.hepatitisscotland.org.uk

Take Home Naloxone

www.naloxone.org.uk

Edinburgh

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