

VII.A. Recognising club drugs

'Club drugs' refer to a wide range of chemicals typically consumed at rave clubs and outdoor parties. In recent years, however, more and more youth are choosing to use these drugs alone at home or at smaller, private parties. Most of these drugs have a hallucinogenic or stimulant effect, but some are depressants. The most common club drugs are ecstasy and LSD, but a wide range of other drugs are also used. Club drugs can take on a variety of appearances, so any powder, pill, capsule, or ampoule that cannot be positively identified should be suspect, particularly if found concealed.

Ecstasy is usually encountered in pill form, although some locally manufactured capsules appear from time to time. These pills come in a range of colours and designs. Many

Figure 28

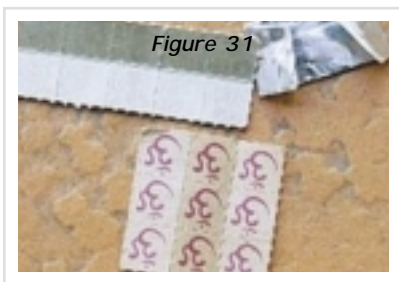


Figure 29



Figure 30





are stamped with logos from popular culture, such as automobile logos, but some are simply plain or scored. Most ecstasy pills are about the size and shape of an aspirin pill (Figures 28 to 30), but the drug may also be encountered in capsule form.

LSD is a very potent drug, doses of which are measured in micrograms. This means that LSD can appear in a variety of forms, but most common are small pieces of blotter paper that have been treated with the chemical in solution. These pieces of paper are often perforated like a stamp, but usually smaller in size, and contain cartoon-like or psychedelic designs (Figure 31). Care should be taken in handling LSD as ingestion of even a small amount can have effects lasting for many hours.

While less common, magic mushrooms are especially popular in outdoor raves. They appear as dried mushrooms, sometimes reduced to a powder. This drug produces mind-altering effects similar to LSD, but described as more 'organic', and so is more popular with outdoor ravers.

Gamma hydroxy butyrate (GHB, also known as Liquid Ecstasy), can appear as a white powder, but is more often found in solution in water, where it is virtually impossible to detect. It does impart a soapy or salty taste to the water, but even small amounts of the drug can result in unconsciousness, depending on the concentration of the solution, so don't go tasting it. Most often, you will encounter GHB in the system of a person who has collapsed due to overdosing. Such a person will appear comatose, with depressed heart rate and respiration, but the effect wears off after a few hours with few ill-effects. The greatest dangers to such a person are four:

- While unconscious, a person under the influence of GHB is clearly subject to abuse, such as rape;
- GHB can induce nausea, and there is a risk of aspirating vomit;
- Inappropriate medical response aimed at boosting heart rate or respiration can cause more harm, and will have little positive effect;
- If combined with alcohol or other depressants, the cumulative effect can be fatal.

The best course of action upon encountering an unconscious person whose associates claim is under the influence of 'liquid e' is to call for medical assistance, ensure that respiration is unimpeded, put the person in the recovery position (on their sides, with arms and legs drawn up in front to support the body), and determine from associates whether other drugs or alcohol have been used. The person should be monitored continuously until medical assistance or during transport to a medical facility. On transfer to medical staff, they should be notified of the reported reasons for unconsciousness.

2 CB (also know as Nexus), which can appear as either a pill or a capsule (Figures 32 and 33). Its effects have been described as a cross between LSD and ecstasy.

Rohypnol is a pharmaceutical sleeping tablet manufactured by Roache, and appears as a blue tablet (Figure 34). It produces intense intoxication and relaxation, and can induce memory loss. Thus, it is probably the most frequently used 'date rape' drug. Roache has added a dye to more recent batches of the pills in order to prevent this, and drinks that mysteriously turn blue are a telltale sign. It is also used to go to sleep after use of stimulants, such as ecstasy or cocaine.

DOB produces LSD-type effects but longer lasting and even more intense. It usually appears as piece of blotter paper with a design, similar to LSD (Figure 35). Due to its intensity and duration, use of this drug is rare.

Ketamine (also known as Special K) is an animal tranquilizer that produces bizarre out-of-body experiences. Users frequently feel unable to move while under the influence, so the drug has some potential as a date rape drug. It can appear as a white crystalline powder or a tablet or an injectable bottle. Like GHB, the drug can

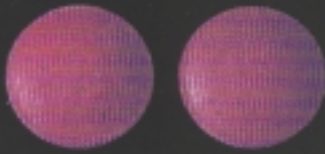


Figure 32



Figure 33

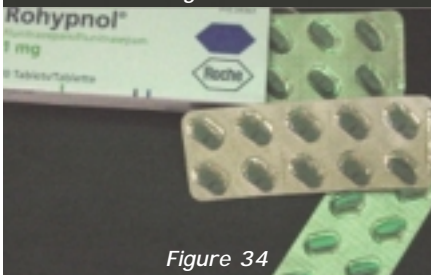


Figure 34



Figure 35

produce nausea while also impeding the ability of the body to respond appropriately, so those under the influence should be watched carefully while in the recovery position (on their sides, with arms and legs drawn up in front to support the body).