



A143 A Survey of Forensic and Law Enforcement Professionals on Synthetic Drug Trends: A One Year Follow-Up

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an understanding of the changes in trends of synthetic drugs throughout the United States that occurred over the past year.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the change in trends for synthetic drug samples in a one-year period. Synthetic drug compounds are continuously being introduced into the United States; therefore, staying current on changing trends is important for police officers and forensic scientists.

A survey was given to forensic science and law enforcement professionals participating in online continuing education courses during 2011. Due to the rapid changes in synthetic drug compounds and related legislation, a follow-up survey was performed one year later to observe changes in trends in that period. The original survey, as well as the follow-up survey, consisted of the questions listed:

1. In what state do you work?
2. Do you work for a local or state agency?
3. What is your job title?
4. Have you encountered synthetic drugs samples in your position?
5. What synthetic drug compounds are you specifically seeing?
6. How often are you working with synthetic drug samples?
7. Do you perform testing in-house for synthetic drugs?
8. If yes, can you elaborate on your testing protocol?
9. If no, what is the protocol for synthetic samples in your agency?
10. What further information can you provide regarding synthetic drugs?

The original survey showed that 79% of those surveyed had encountered synthetic drug samples in their job position. Of those surveyed, the majority were testing synthetic drug samples monthly, although some were testing samples daily.

The follow-up survey had one additional question added in order to record the number of professionals who participated in related surveys, courses, and articles in order to determine how much information and/or questions they have received in the last year. The purpose of the latest survey is to gather the most up-to-date data possible and present this information to the forensic community. The current survey data will be compiled through January 31, 2013, allowing for the most current data to be presented. Comparing the original survey and the current survey will aid in demonstrating the rapid pace at which these types of compounds develop.

The original survey was given in order to observe overall trends in synthetic drugs from the forensic professional's view, while the follow-up survey will provide the forensic community with a more detailed explanation of what has occurred over the last year in the synthetic drug market. More individual cities and states are enforcing their own bans on specific compounds and groups of compounds; therefore, observing recent trends is important. Synthetic drugs are unable to be classified as easily as other illicit drugs due to the vast number of compounds; therefore, identifying trends may aid in the process of uniformly banning synthetic drugs across the country. Not only will the results demonstrate what is currently being observed throughout the country, but what may be seen in the future. Unlike traditional illicit drugs, synthetic drugs are continually being developed, which causes problems for forensic laboratories due to the lack of identification testing methods. With the rapid development of this group of drugs, published data may quickly go out of date, which is why an up-to-date, one-year comparison survey can benefit the forensic community. Traditionally, a one-year follow-up survey may not present enough data to show change, yet with a market such as synthetic drugs, a year is a large enough time frame for significant changes to be observed.

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