



B170 Synthetic Drug Trends in the United States

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This goal of this presentation is to increase attendees' understanding of the synthetic drug market in the United States by illustrating the synthetic cannabinoid, substituted cathinone, and hallucinogenic phenethylamine seizure trends tracked by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by increasing the forensic, enforcement, and legislative communities' understanding of the current trends and flow of synthetic drugs within the United States in order to be better prepared to fight the synthetic drug epidemic.

By employing a variety of sources, information was obtained regarding drug exhibits analyzed by the eight DEA chemistry laboratories and various state and local forensic laboratories. Among the information maintained by these sources are seizure details and analytical results, which can be used to compile drug intelligence, detect the appearance of new drugs of abuse, and monitor drug trends. Data were collected for this analysis through a query of archived seizure and analysis information compiled by these sources. The information targeted in this query included the date and location of the seizure, brand names of the products seized, and substances identified during the chemical analysis. This information was compiled to construct a nationwide trend analysis of the synthetic drug market.

This study utilizes numerical data from various sources of information to track overall trends in the synthetic drug market. In addition to a breakdown of nationwide DEA synthetic drug seizure data, a number of trends will be investigated. This includes the effects of federal legislation on the number of seizures of a particular synthetic drug, as well as tracking of brand names to observe the change in active ingredients over time. Geographic trends such as location of the DEA's first encounter of a substance and prevalence of compounds over a geographic area are also explored. Trends in the use of adulterants and diluents are examined within the scope of geographical area and brand name.

Since the introduction of synthetic cannabinoids and substituted cathinones to the United States' illicit drug market in the late 2000s, the synthetic drug market has exploded. These products offer unique challenges to the entire criminal justice system, in part due to the rapid speed at which the suppliers alter these compounds to circumvent current drug legislation. The DEA Special Testing and Research Laboratory has encountered approximately 300 new psychoactive substances since they first emerged in the United States in 2009. In addition to understanding the past and present synthetic drug situation, the trend information presented may be used to predict what compounds could be popular next.

Synthetic Drugs, Trends, Designer Drugs