



H141 Cocaine as the Sole Intoxicant in an Unusual Suicidal Overdose

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand that cocaine can be the sole intoxicant in a suicidal overdose.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by describing how cocaine can be the sole intoxicant in a suicidal overdose in the circumstances of an unusual personal belief system.

Drug overdoses have become far more common in the United States in the past few years. Recreational drugs have previously often been used repeatedly in accidental overdoses with the intent of no serious lasting consequences. Drugs selected in suicide are thought to be dangerous by the users who desire the most serious consequence. Although there is considerable overlap between the drugs commonly used in suicidal versus accidental overdoses, the use of perceived less-dangerous stimulants is rare in suicides.

Cocaine is often the only drug detected in an accidental overdose and frequently one of many in either a suicidal or accidental overdose. Cocaine can be inhaled, snorted, injected intravenously, ingested orally, or absorbed vaginally or rectally, all with potentially fatal outcomes. Cocaine as the only potentially lethal substance used to commit suicide is rare. No other cases are known in per this research in a setting with thousands of accidental cocaine deaths over many decades.

Reported is an intentional overdose using cocaine as the only dangerous substance of a 37-year-old Black female, who was otherwise in excellent health. The decedent was found by her mother, expired in her bed in a prone position with her face in a pillow. Paramedics were summoned and noted that she was in rigor and did not attempt to resuscitate her. Pink fluid stains were on the pillow under her face. A container with only a small amount of residual pink fluid made cloudy with a white residue was found. Drug paraphernalia, including a small clear plastic bag with small white rocks and trace amounts of residual white power along with green leafy vegetable material, was noted. Also obtained was a small container of commercially available of 24K edible gold leaves. The decedent had a history of schizophrenia and/or bipolar disorder with previous suicidal ideation.

The lab results showed a cocaine level of 2,500ng/ml, benzoylecgonine level of 4,100ng/ml, and a cannabinol level of 1.5ng/ml.

The intent was well documented with a mysterious handwritten note of several pages entitled "Death Ritual Protocol." Select quotes included: "Invocation of Eji Ogbe accompany me on the road," "Eat drugs save cocaine for last snort as much as possible," and "My father will come to life with me. The ground will open up." Web-based searches of several of the proper names listed in the note indicated they are part of a religion or system of divination called Ifa. It appears to have originated in West Africa among the Niger-Congo ethnic group centuries ago and is practiced there and throughout the Americas. It plays a role in many syncretic religions such as Santeria, Candomble, Palo, Umbanda Vodou, and others. The notes indicated a clear intent to die, but also the intent to not stay dead.

Suicide, Cocaine, Overdose