

## LETTERS

## DESIGNER DRUGS

## Deaths associated with new designer drug 5-IT

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5-IT or 5-API is the common name for a newly emerging designer drug.<sup>1</sup> It is a positional isomer of the tryptamine drug  $\alpha$ -methyltryptamine and has the chemical structure (1H-indol-5-yl)propan-2-amine. Currently not controlled in Europe, it is covered, however, by the federal analogue acts in the USA<sup>2</sup> and Australia.<sup>3</sup>

Very little is known about the acute or chronic effects of 5-IT. An oral dose of 20 milligrams is said to produce long lived stimulant effects, including increased heart rate, anorexia, diuresis, and slight hyperthermia for about 12 hours.<sup>4</sup>

Recently we identified 5-IT in postmortem blood samples of two young adults. The substance was found in combination with other drugs in one case. In the other, 5-APB/6-APB (a designer drug similar in some respects to the chemical structure of 3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA)) was also found. The National Board of Forensic Medicine in Sweden has recently identified the drug in 14 deaths and 5-IT was said to be the direct cause of death in two of these cases.<sup>5</sup>

5-IT is inexpensive, easily available online as a so called research chemical and therefore has the potential for becoming a replacement for other recently banned designer drugs. The medical community should be aware of both the availability and use of 5-IT within the UK. The drug needs to be banned, but again regulatory control in the UK will be chasing designer drug innovation.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Watson R. EU drug monitoring agency voices concerns over "legal highs". *BMJ* 2010;341:c6491.
- 2 US Food and Drug Administration. Controlled Substances Act. Title 21, chapter 13, subchapter 1. [www.fda.gov/regulatoryinformation/legislation/ucm148726.htm](http://www.fda.gov/regulatoryinformation/legislation/ucm148726.htm).
- 3 Australasian Legal Information Institute. Criminal Code Act 1995. [www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/download.cgi/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/cca1995115](http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/download.cgi/au/legis/cth/consol_act/cca1995115).
- 4 Erowid. [www.erowid.org/library/books\\_online/tihka/tihka148.shtml](http://www.erowid.org/library/books_online/tihka/tihka148.shtml).
- 5 The Swedish National Institute of Public Health. Folkhälsöinstitutet föreslår förbud för ny livsfarlig nätdrog. 26 July 2012. [www.fhi.se/Aktuellt/Nyheter/Folkhalsöinstitutet-foreslar-forbud-for-ny-livsfarlig-natdrog](http://www.fhi.se/Aktuellt/Nyheter/Folkhalsöinstitutet-foreslar-forbud-for-ny-livsfarlig-natdrog).

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