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Case Studies: Synthetic Cannabis Linked to Extended Psychosis

HONOLULU (May 14, 2011) – Case studies indicate the recreational use of synthetic cannabis may lead to psychosis that can last for days or months in some cases, according to a study at the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting in Hawaii.

Researchers at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego followed ten patients hospitalized for psychosis apparently induced by the use of synthetic cannabis, commonly known as “Spice,” “K2,” “Blaze,” and “Red X Dawn.” These are plant material coated with varying combinations of synthetic cannabinoids, which act on the body in a similar way to chemicals found in cannabis. The compounds have not been approved by the FDA for human consumption and little is known about their safety.

The ten patients studied ranged in age from 21 to 25 years old and after use of “Spice” experienced ongoing psychotic symptoms, including auditory and visual hallucinations, paranoid delusions, odd or flat affect, thought blocking, disorganized speech, thoughts of suicide, insomnia, slowed reaction times, agitation and anxiety. Psychotic symptoms generally resolved between five and eight days after admission, but in some cases continued three months or longer.

The research was scheduled for presentation at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 14, at the American Psychiatric Association 164th Annual Meeting, which runs May 14-18 at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu.

The **American Psychiatric Association** is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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