

Broward Briefings

Substance Abuse Information for Action



April 2015

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Flakka Economics: “Five Dollar Insanity”

An outbreak of bizarre behavior and cases of excited delirium in South Florida linked to use of the street drug Flakka have been reported recently in local, national, and global media accounts. Flakka is mostly the drug *alpha*-PVP which is a synthetic cathinone from the same category of substances previously sold as “bath salt” stimulants. Now that most of these drugs are illegal, they have moved from retail sales in gas stations and convenience stores to street drug dealers. *Alpha*-PVP is not just a local drug emergency, it is found around the world.

Sold in quantities as small as 1/10th of a gram for as little as \$4.00 to \$5.00 it is highly profitable for the dealers whose actual cost is very low. *Alpha*-PVP like most emerging synthetic drugs comes from China sold over the internet for about \$1,500 per kilogram and shipped by world-wide express services to local wholesalers. A kilogram provides up to 10,000 doses at a 1/10th of a gram which selling for \$5.00 each will yield \$50,000 in sales or a profit of \$48,500. However to make that sort of money requires high volume in sales. Yet with a retail price of \$5.00 or less than a pack of cigarettes, most anyone can afford it and with a highly addictive drug repeat business is assured, also like cigarettes. Thus younger and poorer populations are targeted as customers. It is being actively sold to and by homeless persons.

Flakka, also known as “gravel” in other parts of the country, is a potent and very dose specific drug. Thus, a little bit provides the desired feelings of euphoria and stimulation with mild hallucinogenic effects. But just a little bit more can trigger heart problems, severe agitation, aggressiveness, psychosis (delusions and hallucinations), extreme paranoia, hyperthermia (body temperatures of 105 degrees and higher) resulting in kidney failure and triggering the excited delirium syndrome. Users run wild convinced that they are being chased, acting violently with adrenaline-like strength in the brain’s fight or flight reaction, requiring 4 to 5 law enforcement officers to restrain them. Once they are restrained they require immediate emergency medical attention or face death. In Broward County, local hospitals are seeing an estimated total of 20 Flakka overdose cases a day. One victim described the drug as “Five dollar Insanity.”



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