

To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS including Emergency Physicians, PA/NPs, Nurses,
Intensivists, Hospitalists
From: Ron Kirschner, MD
Medical Director, Nebraska Regional Poison Center
Subject: Spice, K2, and other Marijuana Substitutes
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The Nebraska Regional Poison Center wants to make practitioners in our area aware of a designer drug growing in popularity in the Midwest. While we've received only a few calls regarding this product, we have concerns that we will see more as its use becomes more widespread.

- The drug is a mixture of herbs sprayed with synthetic substances which **resemble THC, the active ingredient in marijuana**. The product is available on the internet and in stores that sell tobacco or drug paraphernalia under various brand names: **SPICE, K-2, SPICE GOLD SPIRIT VANILLA, ZOHAI** are the ones most commonly used to date.

- Although some sellers claim that these products are intended for use as incense, they are being sought by most buyers as a legal substitute for marijuana and are typically **smoked**.

- A number of synthetic THC analogs have been found in the products. One has been identified as "JWH-018" and is about 10 times more potent than normal THC.

- **The only exposure case reported to our center thus far presented to the ED with anxiety, hyperventilation, and chest tightness, but improved with supportive care after a few hours.**

- A number of patients in neighboring states were found to be **tachycardic, anxious, and agitated (seizures have also been reported)**.

- It's unclear whether the above symptoms are solely related to the high potency analogs sprayed on the herbs, co-ingestion of other street drugs, the presence of other substances in the product, or to the herbs themselves.

- **The Poison Center recommends approaching these patients like anyone with unknown substance abuse:**

- (1) monitoring of vital signs, cardiac, respiratory, and neuro status
- (2) looking for co-ingestants
- (3) giving benzodiazepines as needed for seizures, agitation, or anxiety

- **Please call us if you see patients who have abused these marijuana substitutes, so we can better track the growth of this trend for public health purposes and provide optimal care for our patients.**



Source: www.guardian.co.uk