

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES-HERBAL SMOKE MIXTURES. PREVALENCE AND PROBLEMS IN LATVIA

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**Objectives:** The aim of the survey is to obtain an overview of the trends in the use of herbal smoke mixtures or "Spice" among clients and the specific nature of impairments associated with them.

**Materials and methods:** Data on the use of "Spice" and cannabinoids have been analysed through clinical observations carried out at the Centre for Addiction Medicine and performance results of the Centre for Expertise and Toxicology over 41 months between 2009 and 2012 based on 257 individuals. Diagnosis was based on clinical and laboratory data. New psychoactive substances were identified in urine and blood, and express tests for "spice" were carried out through biochip matrix technology.

**Results:** In 2012 a fourfold growth of "Spice" users has been noted as compared to 2009; among them 86.8 % were 27 years old and younger and 38.7 % were minors. Compared to cannabinoid cases, the individuals hospitalised for acute intoxication with "Spice" statistically more frequently ( $p < 0.05$ ) suffered from fear, anxiety, panic attacks, agitation, whereas frequency of psychotic manifestations and acute schizophrenia symptoms demonstrated by the two groups were similar. Among the "Spice" cases proved through laboratory testing, 66.7 % had signs of intoxication with characteristic, but non-specific symptoms of the vegetative nervous system.

**Conclusion:** Over the past years there has been a significant growth in the consumption of "Spice". The clinical manifestations of "Spice" are not sufficiently typical for detecting the substance without the use of laboratory tests. Safe identification of substances through the use of specific testing methods is required.