



## The impact of legislative changes on acute harm and deaths related to new psychoactive substances

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Over the last decade there has been an increase in the availability of new psychoactive substances (NPS) across the world. The majority of these substances have been structural modifications of existing classical illicit recreational drugs, which have been controlled by international control measures (e.g. the United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) and the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)) and/or regional/national control measures.

When an individual NPS or class of NPS was detected that cannot be controlled under existing legislation, individual countries and/or regions have reviewed the evidence of the availability, use and harms associated with the use of the NPS to determine whether these substances should be subject to control by addition to the existing legislative measures. This typically has been a prolonged process, such that some NPS have “disappeared” from the recreational drug scene, as sellers realise they are associated with severe acute harm, before the legislative processes have been completed; as example of this would be desoxypipradrol in the UK. As a result of the process delays in controlling the rapidly evolving number of NPS available, there have been a number of approaches to control NPS under new legislation (which may have different penalties for supply, possession and/or use than existing legislation) more rapidly, and then when appropriate to subsequently control under existing legislative measures.

The impact of these newer approaches to legislative control on the use and harms associated with the use of NPS is as yet clearly understood, however for example control by synthetic cannabinoid brand name at New South Wales state level in Australia rather specific synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonist at Australian Federal level has resulted in greater reduction in calls to the New South Wales Poisons Information services. This talk will discuss the some of the changes to the legislative control used in different countries to tackle the increasing numbers of NPS, and what evidence there is that this has impacted on acute harms associated with the use of NPS.