



The Addiction and Behavioral Health Newsletter

© 2011

A publication of JRW Behavioral Health Services
<http://www.randallwebber.com>

SPECIAL EDITION

FEBRUARY 5, 2011

Severe Psychological Distress Associated With the Use of "K2" Herbal Incense

For several months, we have posting reports and providing training concerning "herbal incense" products, the most prominent of which has been "K2"*. A recurrent theme is that little human research regarding the synthetic cannabinoids that act as the psychoactive (intoxicating) chemicals in herbal incense products has ever been published. Those reports that have been published are generally concerned with single cases (i.e., one individual client or patient) and do not present information that has been validated by well-designed research studies. In fact, at least one team of scientists has stated that "At present, almost nothing is known about the pharmacology, toxicology and safety profile of such compounds in humans, except the opinions of consumers in internet forums" (literately: *En la actualidad, no se sabe casi nada sobre su farmacología, toxicología y seguridad en humanos, si exceptuamos las opiniones de los consumidores en Internet*)[†]. Although the "first generation" herbal incense products such as "K2", "Spice" and "Black Mamba" have now been banned by both federal and state laws, "second generation" brands such as "K3", "Splice" and "Cloud Ten" that contain cannabinoids not named in these laws are now legally available.

Because of the dearth of scientific information regarding herbal incense products, we are publishing here one message from a "K2" user that was posted in an Internet forum. Although many users do not have experiences such as the one you are about to read, we nevertheless provide the following (with no editing) as a cautionary statement.

* As of January 1, 2011, a ban on the ingredients in "K2" and similar products has been in effect

[†] Mustata, C.; Torres Melich, M.; Pardo Lozano, R.; Pérez, C. & Farré Albaladejo, M. (2009). Spice Drugs: Los Cannabinoides Como Nuevas Drogas de Diseño. *Adicciones: Revista de Sociodrogalcohol*, 21(4): 181-186. Retrieved February 5, 2011 from <http://www.adicciones.es/files/181-186%20editorial%20farre.pdf>

K2 (JWH-018) ruined my life.

I'm sure you all have heard of K2 Summit, and probably smoked it some time or another, well here is my story about it, and how it's ruined my life.

So since the age of 16 I've recreationally smoked marijuana, I'm now almost 19 and all my good friends and most the people I know still do. A few months ago, around October, I had a couple friends in trouble with the law, as well as a few friends who preferred the legality and high of K2, who started smoking K2 Summit everyday.

I smoked it on only about 5 occasions total, the last two it totally took me to a bad place. The feeling is indescribable, but I remember I could only sit there with my hands on my face, my brain in intense pain, feeling as though it was just melting into itself, nothing like a headache, leaps and bounds worse.

About a week later I started getting horrible headaches, this is in December. They got worse and worse and worse. This horrible feeling (there's no possible way to describe how painful it is) in my brain would return everytime I:

- a.) ate sugar
- b.) was up more than 8 hours
- c.) took tylenol or any over the counter pain reliever
- d. take any medication to make me tired
- e. took my ADD medication (ridalin)
- f. ate salt
- g. worst of all, I couldn't smoke weed anymore, ever.

I imagine for most people, this (Ed: not being able to smoke pot) wouldn't be such a big deal. Other drugs are nice, sure, but I am a pothead. I love the giggles, I love the munchies, I love the perception, I love the creative flow, I love how it makes music amazing, sex, everything. No more of it. Imagine every time you're hanging out with friends, time after time you're offered a blunt, or a joint, or anything, and you have to refuse because if you take just one toke, for the next five hours you'll wish you were dead, because the brain melting pain just isn't worth it.

Worse yet, nobody can possibly relate, and I have nobody to relate to, because I can't find any reason for it on the internet, nobody with the same symptoms, everyone just says how awesome they think it is. I have one friend, who this started happening to, after he smoked it literally every hour of every day for 3 months straight. Now I have one other person in the same boat as me, but we still have found no help in the world.

(Sorry this is so long, but I feel all of this is necessary.)

These headaches begin when we wake up, and end when we fall asleep. The rest of the time they can be anywhere from tolerable, though still painful, to "I'm sorry I just can't deal with this conversation/work/hobby/anything"

We've both been to neurologists and brain surgeons, had MRIs and CAT scans done, taken different medications to help, but nobody has any idea, they just treat it like a headache, and all the headache medications only seem to make it worse.

I think it is somehow related to dopamine receptors or saratonin, because all of the things that trigger it, are supposed to cause pleasure. My friend thinks it has something to do with endorphins, for the same reason. But sex releases endorphines, and it doesn't make the pain worse.

The one and only cure is beer. I don't like it, and I think it sounds stupid, or like I want to be an alcoholic or something, but it's true. Liquor helps slightly, but then makes it worse, and it wears off much more quickly.

Can anybody offer any sort of feedback or know anybody who's gone through this? It's everyday and it's killing me and nothing will cure it. I'm at my wits end. Any help would be greatly appreciated.[‡]

To provide updated information on this rapidly issue, we will offer an IAODAPCA-approved webinar "Herbal Incense: The New Marijuana?" "once a week.

Each month, one of these will be available free of charge. Dates and times are posted soon at <http://www.randallwebber.com>

Information regarding single case reports that involve herbal incense products can be found on our website and in future issues of the *Addiction and Behavioral Health Newsletter*

[‡] The editor has been in touch with this person and is assisting him in finding treatment for the problems he describes.