
Social Impact of Latest Street Drug: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Meow – Meow is a latest street drug available in the market as a recreational and euphoretic agent at minimal rate when compared to other prominent agents like cocaine, heroin etc. Chemically it is 4 – Methyl Methcathinone or 4 – Methyl ephedrone, which has various pharmacological and severe harmful effects. The maximum effect is produced when the agent is snorted. It is mostly used by teenagers with high prevalence rate who are doing their schooling, high schooling as well as professional college students around the globe especially in the age group of 15 – 30 years. The agents might be used accounting for various factors such as easy availability, cheap rate and excessive stimulant action. Even though this agent produces such a high level of stimulation and euphoria it is short lived and leads to permanent deterioration of health or even death of the user. The social impact of such an agent should be viewed seriously as it destroys the future generation of any country especially in a developing country like India. The compound can be ordered online and will be delivered to the door step of prospective buyers. The compound being a novel agent it is not included under the narcotics and psychotropic substances act of 1958 of India, hence control by the authorities is limited. In such a scenario, social awareness of such a notorious agent among the mist of young and energetic future citizens of any country should be taken up as a social responsibility.

KEYWORDS: M- CAT, Mephedrone, Meow – Meow

INTRODUCTION

A latest street drug or a new derivative of an old drug belonging to amphetamine and cathinone classes, 4 – methyl methcathionone (M – CAT). The natural derivative of the compound is found in a plant indigenous to Africa and Arabia. It is derived from *Catha edulis* of family celastraceae. The finished product is off – white, fine white or a yellowish crystalline powder. Mostly the leaves of the plant were traditionally used as evening tea for stimulation.

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HISTORY

The plant, *Catha edulis*, chewing has a history as social custom dating back thousands of years. It was first grown in Ethiopia. The Ancient Egyptians considered the khat plant a divine food, which was capable of releasing humanity's divinity. The Egyptians used the plant for more than its stimulating effects; they used it for transcending into "apotheosis", with the intent of making the user god-like. Sufis also used it to intensify their mystical experience and to facilitate a sense of union with God. In 1980, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified it as a drug of abuse that can produce mild-to-moderate psychological dependence but less than tobacco or alcohol.

How is it consumed?

There are different ways in which the drug can be consumed viz. snorted, swallowed, injected or mixed with liquids to drink. The most effective method to get maximum action is snorting (bombing) in which the agent is wrapped in a cigarette paper and forcefully inhaled.



Figure 1: Bombing (snorting)

Availability: the agent is available in different forms like white powder with yellow tinge, crystals in the form of capsules and pills.



Figure 2: Powder form of MCAAT

Harmful effects of meow – meow:

The hazardous and deleterious effects of 4 – methyl methcathione include loss of appetite, muscle weakness, tremors, headache, anxiety issues, hypertension, chest pain and cardiac problems to name a few. When overdose of this compound as occurs with drug addiction

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produces the effects which damages various organ systems such as Nervous system (seizures), cardiovascular system (arrhythmias) and can cause death due to failure of breathing (respiratory failure). The possible long term effects based on the nature of chemical is disturbance is sleep affecting behaviour and cognition, hallucination (auditory and visual) and physical, emotional dependence.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The plant, *Catha edulis*, and its extra ordinary effects as we have seen were used for ancient mysticisms only. Now a days the picture is different the semi – synthetic derivative is being distributed among young students worldwide. This new and latest agent is far more devastating, cheaper agent than the already available narcotics such as heroin, cocaine etc. It makes the user feel alert, confident, talkative and euphoric and some people will temporarily feel strong affection for those around them. On continuous use Psychosis occurs quickly, mood changes and paranoia are intensified.

World Scenario:

90 confirmed cases of fatalities were reported in United Kingdom. Typical mephdrone victims was reported to be young males with previous history of drug misuse and notable number of cases involved self harm behaviour and hanged themselves to death. The agent is been reported to be used in dance clubs as recreational supplement in various countries around the globe such as UK, Singapore, European countries like Sweden has also been reported in USA, Australia, Romania, Guernsey. The prevalence and incidence rate is common in teens and youth throughout the world.

Indian Scenario:

In the cities of metropolitan character such as Mumbai, this agent has gained immense popularity and escalated to the level of an epidemic in recent times. The popularity is accounted for the fact that the agent can be ordered online and will be delivered to the doorstep. It has gained a reputation as a party drug and the city's bands are said to be heavily into it. Use of these designer drugs may lead to multi-organ failure and death. It has become increasingly evident that MCAT is highly dangerous to public health. This warrants educating and training healthcare providers to provide optimum management of this social issue. According to M Sharma, M Chaudhary (2016) research; 46.36 % adolescents of the slum area used substance like Gutkha, Tobacco, Smoking, Alcohol, Afeem, Ganja, Thinner and Marijuana. 54.91% admitted to using one time, 23.53% admitted rarely, 15.68% admitted occasionally and 5.88% admitted that they have craving for drugs, so use frequently. The most common substances used were Gutkha 46.36%, tobacco 40.91%, smoking 37.27%, and alcohol 13.63%. 8.18% substance abusers used multiple substances.

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CONCLUSION

The agent (meow – meow) which is a semi - synthetic derivative of the original compound cathinone, is a very powerful stimulant which causes high level of dependence that destroys the future generation of any country.

The plant, *Catha edulis* was originally used as a recreational stimulant by the ancient Egyptians, Sufis etc for experiencing mystical effects. The chemical constituent involved in it and its action on the body and mind is now evident. The agent even though provides a temporary pleasure and mystical feeling is deleterious to the society if goes unchecked. The current scenario reveals that it is high time that the authorities and public are to be made aware of this type of a silent killer lurking in our own backyards. M Sharma, V Sharma (2016) found that reveals that characteristics associated with non-treated drug addicts are anxiety, obsession, phobia, summarization, depression and hysteria, and death anxiety in their study.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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