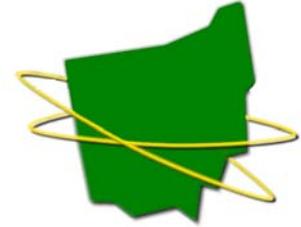




OSAM-O-GRAM

DATE: April 2003
DATELINE: Columbus, Ohio



Wright State University
The University of Akron

Growing Awareness of Dangers of GHB Apparently Leading to Decreases in Abuse

Despite the fact that GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is relatively easy to manufacture illicitly and is usually cheap to purchase, current OSAM Network reports suggest that the popularity of the drug continues to decline across the state. Evidence from interviews with club drug users in the Columbus area indicate that GHB is often regarded as “a date rape drug” and is considered very dangerous. Several young adults attributed their reluctance to use GHB to media messages and other information about the drug, describing the potential risks associated with its use. A club drug user interviewed in Columbus explained:

I think it was something I read, like when I was... younger... I think it disturbed me, 'cause I have had chances to do it, and... normally a person like me... put it on the table... you know, I'll do it. But for some, I don't know where it came from, I just will not do GHB.

Evidence from Columbus further suggests that club drug users not only avoid the drug themselves, but also seek to “advertise” or inform others against its use.

Participant: *GHB and “roofies” [rohypnol], like “ravers” hate [them]. True “ravers,” people that know about the scene hate that [them]... 'cause it just makes the whole scene look bad.*

Interviewer: *So that would be like the t-shirt I saw at a rave that said “GHB is stupid”?*

Participant: *...I've seen them all... “GHB kills,” um...*

Based on data collected in Columbus, the decreasing popularity of GHB and its analogs among club drug users may be related partly to the media portrayal of the drug, negative experiences with the drug, information sharing among peers about the dangers of GHB, and the increased difficulty of obtaining the drug through the Internet. The case of GHB may offer insights to developing drug prevention programs to young drug users. It suggests that the media does influence drug awareness. The challenge to the field is to identify which messages foster curiosity about drugs, thereby potentially increasing their popularity, and which messages actually make drugs less attractive to users, thereby decreasing their abuse.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the January 2003 OSAM Network meeting.

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