

## Party Drugs: A Growing Problem

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### Abstract

Rave parties have in recent years gained increasing popularity amongst youngsters in Hong Kong. Whilst organizers have to overcome such difficulties as fire precaution, crowd control, first aid facilities, maintenance of air quality within the venue and prevention of criminal activities, capable of attracting crowds from 1,000 to 6,000 people, organizing rave parties has become a lucrative business. Recently consumption of controlled substances in rave parties has attracted community and media concerns. 'Party drug' is a vague term representing a wide variety of drugs used by young adults at raves, most of which being controlled drugs. They are usually in the form of small tablets, capsules or powder and thus can be easily concealed and smuggled into party venues. Locally, Ecstasy, 'Ice' and Ketamine are the most popular party drugs. Since 1993 when it was first encountered, the number of Ecstasy tablets examined by the Government Laboratory rocketed from 28 to last year's figure of 378,370. On the other hand, the yearly examined amount of Ketamine rose from less than 1 g in 1996-98 to over 9.7 kg in 2000! At the same time, new species of party drugs emerge; these include 'Fing 霸' which contains LSD and 'Give Me Five' or '五仔' which is believed to be Nimetazepam. No party drug is benign. One special feature of these drugs is that when they are manufactured, quality control is not a priority. Uncertainties about the drug source, active ingredients present, chemicals used to manufacture them, and possible contaminants make it difficult to determine toxicity, consequences and symptoms that might be expected. Party drugs are perilous, not only because of the possibility of overdose but also because of their psychological, stimulating or hallucinogenic effects that could impair abuser's perception and/or judgement. The latter could well be equally, if not more dangerous, than the corresponding physiological hazards of the drugs. In addition, these substances whether taken voluntarily or by deceit leave women vulnerable to sexual assault and rape. As the variety and potency of party drugs increase, the problem of drug abuse in raves has become a social issue that needs to be addressed.