

## DESIGNER DRUGS: PSYCHOACTIVE EFFECTS AND DIFFUSION IN AN ITALIAN UNIVERSITY POPULATION

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**Introduction:** A new generation of synthetic compounds, readily available on the web, has recently come on the market. Designer Drugs are produced with the intent to elicit effects similar to controlled substances getting round the drugs laws. Two of the most recent Designer Drugs are "Spice" and "Bath Salts". They produce psychoactive reinforcement, are highly attractive, perceived as safe drugs and not easily detectable in urine and blood samples.

**Methods:** The study focused on quantifying the presence of these compounds among the possible illicit substances usually consumed among adolescents and young adults. Besides we aimed to evaluate the existence of websites related to Designer Drugs and aimed at dividing their positions towards drug use in three main categories : Anti Drugs, Pro Drugs and Harm Reduction Approach.

**Results:** The diffusion of the phenomenon is still at his beginning, although most of the subjects interviewed had some knowledge of the phenomenon. A web mapping has underlined the preponderance of Pro Drugs websites. As regards "Spice", 77 is the total number of related websites: 53 (69 %) Pro Drugs, 17 (22%) Anti Drugs and 7 (9 %) Harm Reduction Approach.

**Conclusions:** Although the internet provides a wide range of information about the side effects of Designer Drugs and many Countries have banned them, there is still a high number of Pro Drugs websites that actively promotes their consume. However, the level of use in Italy is still low, according to the data emerging from the sample recruited.