

ALERT!

Salvia Divinorum
November 2007

An information bulletin from the National Drug Intelligence Center was sent to the SCIP office by Sergeant Glenn Elwell of the Nebraska State Patrol. Salvia Divinorum is an herb that contains the hallucinogen Salvinorin A. Sgt. Elwell states, "I have been contacted by numerous parents regarding a drug that is currently not controlled and is being sold at the Head Shops in Lincoln and Omaha. The drug is Salvia Divinorum and it is a hallucinogen similar to mescaline or psilocybin. Our problem is it is not covered in the federal Controlled Substance Act and is being sold at the Head Shops as Salvia." Sgt. Elwell asked that the SCIP office distribute this information. The following are excerpts from unclassified Selected Intelligence Brief, Microgram Bulletin, Vol XXXVI, No. 6.

Background

Salvia Divinorum is often referred to as "Ska Maria Pastora" and "Diviner's Sage." It is a perennial herb in the mint family that resembles sage. It can be grown in any humid, semitropical climate, as well as indoors. Within the United States, the plant primarily is cultivated in California and Hawaii.

Other plants with similar properties include Cannabis sativa and Artemisia Absinthium, know as wormwood. At this time there is no accepted medical use for Salvia Divinorum.

Abuse

Abusers ingest Salvia Divinorum using various methods of administration. It can be smoked or chewed, like tobacco. It can be brewed and ingested as a tea. When converted into liquid extract, it can be vaporized and inhaled.

Immediately after ingesting the drug, abusers typically experience vivid hallucinations—including out-of-body experiences, sensations of traveling through time and space, and feelings of merging with inanimate objects. Some abusers experience intense synesthesia, an effect that causes the abuser's senses to become confused. They may describe hearing colors or smelling sounds. Abusers have reported experiencing negative effects during their first use; others have indicated the drug caused them to become introverted and sometimes unable to communicate clearly.

The hallucinogenic effects of Salvia Divinorum generally last 1 hour or less, unlike other hallucinogens like LSD or PCP. High doses of the drug can cause unconsciousness and short-term memory loss. Long-term effects of abuse are unknown. However, the effects may be similar to other hallucinogens such as depression, schizophrenia, and persistent flashbacks.

Current levels of abuse are difficult to determine. The most likely abusers consist of young adults and adolescents who frequent "head shops" or have been influenced by Internet sites promoting the drug.

Availability

Salvia Divinorum is most often distributed via the Internet and at some "head shops." Prices for it vary widely, but are generally higher for plants grown in Hawaii and Central Mexico. An ounce of leaves sells for \$15-\$120 while the plants sell for \$20-\$45 each. Liquid extract of Salvia Divinorum (produced by crushing the leaves of the plants and using solvents to extract Salvinorin A) sells for \$110-\$300 per ounce.

Legislation

The production, distribution and abuse of Salvia Divinorum or Salvinorin A currently are not federally regulated. The Hallucinogen Control Act of 2002 contains a provision to regulate the two products and it is expected to be reintroduced during the current session of Congress.

Law enforcement officials in St. Peters, Missouri, indicate that Salvia Divinorum abuse by young people in that area is extremely high. St. Peters became the first community to enact a local ordinance designed to regulate the distribution of it.

Visit www.salvia.net to see how this product is being promoted.