

Both the range of drugs and drugs markets are expanding and diversifying

The legalization of hemp in the United States of America following passage of the 2018 Farm Bill has resulted in unintended consequences, i.e., the proliferation of “look-a-like,” “imitation” or “marijuana like” products such as delta-9 THC, delta-10 THC and THC-O, as well as numerous other synthetic and semi-synthetic cannabinoids. As written, the definition of hemp in the 2018 Farm Bill allows for the continuous engineering of new synthetic and semi-synthetic cannabinoids, including delta-6 THC, delta-11 THC, THC-A, THC-P, THC-V, THC-JD, PHC, HHC, HHC-P and HXC. Therefore, over time, there has been a vast growth in the number and potency of these products. There is a wide range of different cannabinoid substances sold, the number of which steadily increases over time. Few to none of these substances beyond delta-8 THC have been analyzed in a peer-reviewed or evidence-supported way for either short-term safety effects or long-term use. These chemicals are essentially designer drugs, and we are unsure of the health impacts of using them at any age. The rapid growth in the number of these products makes regulation almost impossible to achieve as can be seen at the website below. We have watched the availability of the products offered exponentially increase over time.

These products are purposely named, packaged and marketed in ways that make them particularly attractive and dangerous to kids. For example, many delta-8 THC products display bright colored cartoon characters and names which are specifically designed to appeal to children such as “Grape Ape”, “Girl Scout Cookie”, “Pineapple Express,” “S’mores Chocolate”, “Space Gods” and “Rainbow Sourbelts”. Potency limits for synthetic and semi-synthetic cannabinoid products are rare, despite evidence that using higher potency products carries a greater risk of harm.

Side effects of synthetic and semi-synthetic cannabinoid use can include disorientation, sedation, anxiety, agitation, tachycardia (increased heart rate), hypertension, dyspnea (labored breathing), nausea, vomiting, hyperglycemia (high blood sugar), hypokalemia (low potassium), seizures, impaired vision, hearing and touch and hyperreflexia (increased or overactive reflex response).