Latest emerging issues: Designer drugs in East and South-East Asia

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Designer drugs: an emerging threat

- Synthetic and prescription drugs
- Increasing number and diversity
- ‘Legal highs’
  - imitate controlled substances
  - evolve rapidly

Source: EMCDDA

Source: U.S. National Drug Intelligence Center

Source: EMCDDA
New substances

- Piperazines (BZP & TFMPP)
- Mephedrone
- ‘Spice’
- Benzodiazepines
Why designer drugs?

- Evade law enforcement
- Substances not controlled
- Replacements for other substances
- Meet evolving demand
Key trends

• Global
  – Rapidly increasing seizures
  – In 2010: > 40 new substances identified in Europe

• Regional
  – Viet Nam: Emergence of TFMPP, BZP, ‘Sea Water’
  – Philippines: BZP sold as ‘mimic ecstasy’
  – Thailand: Emerging in backpacker destinations
Challenges

• To public health and law enforcement

• Require improved monitoring and coordinated response

• Problems related to non-med use of prescription drugs

• Limited data

• Will designer drugs follow the Ketamine example?
Responses/ Recommendations?

- Key issues – commonalities & differences
- Future impact on drug use, responses, policies
- Increase forensic capacity

Sources: Hunterdon Drug Awareness Program; Alternative Highs
Roundtable discussion