An issue about Ketamine in Taiwan

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Abstract

In this paper we focus on the situation of Ketamine abuse in Taiwan. Because Ketamine has four characteristics as follow: Low in price, Access easily, Mild punishments, and Ease of take, and these are the reasons why spread out rapidly. We implemented the questionnaires to investigate police colleagues who working in local police station where belongs to New Taipei County Police Department and Taipei City Police Department. We investigated the item as follow: personal experience of police officers, the place where be banned, the career of offenders, the reason why offenders abused drugs, and the intention that police officers want to seize continuously or not. Finally, we propose some suggestions about control and prevent the abusing questions about Ketamine.
I · Introduction
Ketamine was originally developed in 1965 as a derivative of phencyclidine (PCP), which was synthesized in 1926, a feat made possible by the discovery of a new organic Grignard reaction by Parke-Davis scientist Harold Maddox. Initially known as CI-581, Ketamine was first synthesized by Parke-Davis scientist Calvin Stevens. Pharmacological investigations in human subjects began in 1964. [1] Nonmedical use of Ketamine was documented in the early 1970s in underground literature. It was used in psychiatric and other academic research through the 1970s, culminating in 1978 with the publishing of psychonaut John Lilly's The Scientist and Marcia Moore and Howard Alltounian's Journeys into the Bright World, which documented the unusual phenomenology of Ketamine intoxication.[2] The incidence of nonmedical Ketamine use increased through the end of the century, especially in the context of raves and other parties.[3][4][5] Ketamine is difficult to be manufactured; therefore, most of the illicit supply is diverted from human and veterinary anesthesia products. As a pharmaceutical, Ketamine is distributed in a liquid form that can be ingested or injected. In clubs, it usually has been dried to a powder and is smoked in a mixture of marijuana or tobacco, or is taken intranasally. A typical method uses a nasal inhaler, called a “bullet” or “bumper”; an inhalation is called a “bump”. Ketamine often is taken in “trail mixes” of Methamphetamine, Cocaine, Sildenafil citrate (Viagra), or Heroin.[6] Effects of Ketamine ingestion appear rapidly and last about 30 to 45 minutes, with sensations of floating outside the body, visual hallucinations, and a dream-like state.[3] Along with these “desired” effects, users also commonly experience confusion, anterograde amnesia, and delirium. They also may experience tachycardia, palpitations, hypertension, and respiratory depression with apnea. “Flashbacks” or visual disturbances can be experienced days or weeks after ingestion.[7] The increase in illicit use prompted Ketamine's placement in Schedule III of the United States Controlled Substance Act in August 1999. In the United Kingdom, it became labeled a Class C drug on 1 January 2006. In Canada, Ketamine is classified as a Schedule I narcotic, as of August 2005. In Hong Kong, as of 2000, Ketamine is regulated under Schedule 1 of Hong Kong Chapter 134 Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. It can only be used legally by health professionals, for university research purposes, or with a physician's prescription. By 2002, Ketamine was classified as schedule III in Taiwan; however, rescheduling into schedule II is being considered.[8] The cause of the spread of Ketamine described as follows:
Low in price:
According to the current police investigation condition, 300-500 NTD can get a few volume of Ketamine, but the price is far worse from the Heroin (which was classified
as schedule I) or Amphetamines (which was classified as schedule II).

Access easily:
Ketamine can be bought at audiovisual entertainment venues (like KTV, ballroom and open-air concerts etc.), visitor accommodations (like motel, hotel and public house etc.), wine shop and private club. Recently, due to the ages of offenders of Ketamine abuse decreased, even heard of gang or drug traffickers employ students as brother, and asked them selling Ketamine to other students in school.

Mild punishments:
According to the present law, possession of Ketamine which was classified as schedule III over 20 grams shall be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than three years and fine; but if possession of Ketamine less than 20 grams, the punishment will be the same with the offenses of drug abuse, shall be fined for not less than ten thousand NTD but not more than fifty thousand NTD, and force to join the study of drug hazard and control for not less than four hours but not more than eight hours. Although the present law has punishments within, but the punishments are too mild, so the deterrence never works actually.

Ease of take:
Neither like the Heroin needs the syringes, nor the Amphetamines need the application tools, or mix into cigarette and abuse it with smoking. The easiest way is snorting Ketamine directly, it’s also become one of the reason why spread out so quickly.

Accordingly, we have made the survey with questionnaires, and we will show the analysis and results.

II ・ Method

A. Database and Sampling
In this questionnaire survey, we implemented the questionnaires to investigate police colleagues who working in local police station where belongs to New Taipei County Police Department and Taipei City Police Department in 2009. The questionnaire was issued to police officers who were field personnel directly. We sent out 700 questionnaires altogether, and got 687 valid questionnaires in return.

In questionnaire, we investigated the item as follow: personal experience of police officers, the place where be banned, the career of offenders, the reason why offenders abused drugs, and the intention that police officers want to seize continuously or not.

B. Data Analysis
(A) According to the experience of responders, 45% thought very serious, 41%
thought serious and 14% thought common.

![Pie chart showing percentages of seriousness of experience](image)

**Figure 1**: Personal experience of police officers.

(B) According to the place where Ketamine was confiscated by police, PUBs had the Highest frequency, because people who pass in and out were complex. Sometimes the drug traffickers went into PUB and sold drugs to customers there. The second is KTV. Most of them hold birthday parties or celebration parties for the sake of happiness with their friends; some of them may take drugs with them and provide other snorting. The third is ballroom, and Ketamine was never absent. But it is not often been seen in the hotel or internet-café.

![Pie chart showing places](image)

**Figure 2**: Place where were banned.

(C) In the career of the offender who abused Ketamine be seized by police officers, the most is student (include from junior high school to university students), and we can see the report in mass media easily. The second is office workers. But rather than
the original ranks first in the Laborers with the drugs which were classified in schedule I or schedule II, they were rarely seized in abusing Ketamine.

![Figure 3: Analyses by occupation category.](image)

(D) When we investigate the reason about possession of Ketamine or offenders who abused it, most of them were caused by friend’s temptation, under the curious fun-based mentality trying to contact Ketamine. But offenders who abused Ketamine is less addictive, there are some other reasons, additionally. We will elaborate later.

![Figure 4: The reason why possession of Ketamine or abuse it.](image)

(E) Under the present law and the court’s judgments, most of police offices (54%) are unwilling to continue the investigation about possession of Ketamine drugs or offenders who abused it, and this is the main reason. Although the government and other relevant units have special requirements in order to strengthen investigating the cases about Ketamine abuse. Offenders who possess a large volume of Ketamine or the drug traffickers are the roots that must be eradicated. But according the criminal database, offenders who possess a few volume of Ketamine or only abuse Ketamine
are the vast majority. And the reward which be given to police officers who seized offenders possessing a few volume of Ketamine or only abused Ketamine is inferior. Therefore, it is impossible to improve the investigative intention.

(F) In the questionnaires, we also find that most of police officers approve of amending the law to let Ketamine classified as schedule II, instead of schedule III. Not only prevent the spread of situation getting more exacerbation, but stop the drugs to harm young students’ health and minds.

According to present law, Ketamine still be classified as schedule III. Although the law include some punishments, but Ketamine causes the effects in psychological
addiction are more serious than in physiological addiction. Many government agencies, experts and scholars consider that the age of the offenders who abused Ketamine are too young, if Ketamine classified as schedule II, many young students will keep the criminal records about drug abuse in their whole life. But the truly situation that Ketamine spread out in schools is known by police officers who enforce the law at the front line. So, we still recommend amending the law, or addicting some complementary measures.

III・Conclusions and suggestions

We propose the suggestions as follow:

i・Continues to recommend amending the law to let Ketamine classified as schedule II:
Although the addiction of Ketamine is not very acute, but the extent of abuse and harm against society become increasingly serious. Improve the classified schedule of Ketamine can deter offender from abusing.

ii・Evaluate deleting recidivism records:
In regard to teenagers (most of them were high school students) who abused Ketamine (or any other drugs classified as schedule III or IV) are caused by curious fun-based mentality, we must stand at the stance of the counseling and education, and give them the chance of rehabilitation, instead of tagging them. In addition to gave them punishments, we can also increase the clause which like “If there is no recidivism in two (or three) years, the fore record will be wiped clean” into the present law, or any other similar clauses, to give astray teenagers some chance of rehabilitation.

iii・Strengthening education and guidance:
Not only against the teenagers who addicted to drugs, but the education of school and family also play a more important role. In addition to the school cooperate with government units to promote the correct Anti-drug notions. As regards teenagers who addicted to drugs, in addition to the teenagers must accept criminal liability or administrative penalty, their parents should be forced to accept the courses about Anti-drug and Addiction-treatment together, making their parents to understand the harm in the future and other aspects of the influence, contributing to educate and rectify teenagers together.

Reference