Ontario Poison Centre
Centre Anti-Poison de l'Ontario

April 25, 2018

Contaminated Street Drug Supply

Synthetic Cannabinoids and Kratom

The Ontario Poison Centre (OPC) has been made aware of two separate issues potentially affecting the current street drug supply. The following provides a summary of both issues.

Synthetic Cannabinoids

OPC has become aware that synthetic cannabinoids, (tetrahydrocannabinol derivatives) often sold as "incense" and "not for human consumption", have been contaminated with long-acting anti-coagulants. To date, (April 25, 2018) over 100 cases have been reported to US poison centres with three deaths occurring from excessive bleeding. At this time, the OPC is not aware of any cases that have occured in Ontario or the rest of Canada.

It is postulated that these anti-coagulants have been added to synthetic cannabinoid products to saturate liver enzymes that would otherwise metabolize the cannabinoids, in order to prolong their effects. Long-acting anti-coagulants cannot be routinely analyzed in most Canadian hospital laboratories but their effect is measured as a prolonged INR and decreased Factor II, VII, IX and X levels. Factor replacement for life-threatening bleeding and Vitamin K in massive doses (100mg/day and more) for prolonged periods (up to 120 days) is necessary for treatment. Consult OPC for suspected cases.

Kratom

Kratom is an herbal preparation with sympathomimetic and opioid properties. It is illegal to sell kratom in Canada. Despite this, it is available over the internet or in convenience stores in powder, pill and dried leaf form, with "not for human consumption" labelling. There are adverse health consequences including bad "highs" and cholestatic hepatitis from use.

As Mitragyna speciosa, the evergreen tree from which kratom is extracted, is native to Southeast Asia only, all kratom is imported into Canada. OPC is aware that some products distributed in Canada are contaminated with salmonella and significant illness has occurred. Salmonella poisoning presents with nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and bloody diarrhea in early stages and can cause systemic disease with fever and dehydration. Consult OPC for suspected cases.