

Drugs what Drugs ? Driving impaired do we really need to know what the drug is?

Wednesday 14 November, 1:15pm – 1:45pm

A recent study from ESR has demonstrated that drug-affected drivers involved in serious crashes now out-numbers drunk drivers. Associated with this have been calls for increased road-side drug testing. This presentation will review the current illicit drugs used in New Zealand, what can be detected and what affects they may have on driving. There will be a focus on how we need to look to the future where personal use of drugs may be decriminalised, using cannabis as an example and how we will need to adapt driving legislation to encompass these changes. The dangers of prescription based medicine will also emphasised and how these numbers are growing. The relationship between “drug-levels” and the poor correlation with impairment and physical effect will be explained. The presentation will conclude emphasising that we need to focus more on establishing accurate, repeatable road-side impairment tests rather than the current focus on specific drugs and drug-levels.

Paul James Quigley, Emergency Medicine Specialist, Clinical Toxicologist



OTAGO medical graduate initially training in General Surgery before moving into Emergency Medicine (EM) while working in the Hawke’s Bay. Transferred to Perth, Western Australia, for advanced EM training and while there was fascinated by the amount of emergency presentations from Alcohol and Recreational Drugs. Completed sub-specialty training in Clinical Toxicology combined with rotations in liaison psychiatry to develop skills in Drug and Alcohol medicine.

Became clinical expert in illicit drug use with a special focus on drink spiking and advisor to the Australian Federal Government and Australian Crime Commission. Crown expert on Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault.

Has been involved in providing the Ministry of Health and the Law Commission with data on alcohol harms via the Wellington Regional Hospital patient management system. This process rolled out nationally over 2017 forming the MOH “Mandatory Alcohol Question”. Is also independent board member for The Tomorrow Project an industry funded social change initiative “Cheers”.

Advisor to the Ministry of Health on matters relating to the use of novel psychoactive agents and the development of a national drug early-warning network. Co-creator of the USED extended drug testing program, which enables the detection of all known illicit substances from intoxicated emergency presentations.

Works at the “coal-face” treating trauma-patients from road crashes and also dealing with the consequences of substance abuse. Will be presenting on the current situation with drug impaired drivers. If he was to have a single wish granted to reduce the road toll it would be ban all forms of over-taking.