The overwhelming issue of Drug Facilitated Sexual Assaults (DFSA): the case of GHB

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Dear Editor,

Drug-facilitated sexual assaults (DFSA) currently represent overwhelming issue in its multidisciplinary approach. They occur when alcohol or drugs are used to compromise an individual’s ability to consent to a sexual act. These substances facilitate a perpetrator to commit sexual assault because they inhibit a person’s ability to resist and can prevent them from remembering the assault.

If on the one hand alcohol remains the most commonly used drug in crimes of sexual assault, on the other hand drugs being used by perpetrators in crimes of sexual assault include, but are not limited to, Rohypnol (but also other benzodiazepines can be used), GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyric Acid), GBL (Gamma-Butyrolactone), ketamine and others.

The authors briefly examine the main issues of GHB-facilitated sexual assault in forensic investigation, drawing the attention of the whole scientific community to the importance of a correct assessment of each GHB-FSA, even when it is only suspected and by providing some practical advices.

Key words: Drug Facilitated Sexual Assaults (DFSA), GHB, GBL, Forensic Toxicology

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We wish to draw the attention of the whole scientific community on the importance of a correct assessment of each GHB-FSA, even when it is only suspected, by taking into consideration:

- The exclusion of previous exposure to GHB (besides the one for which the analysis is required), which can affect the results of the analysis.
- the collection of the first hair sample shortly after GHB consumption to determine the endogenous levels in all segments of hair.
- the measurement of the hair growth during the month between the first sampling (time 0) and the second one to carefully determine what should be the “targeted segment”.
- the repetition of the hair sampling 1 month later and performing the segmental analysis of hair from the root to the distal end and cutting the hair into 5 mm (or less) segments.
- the exclusion of the first segment (root part, first 5 mm) since it is more prone to be contaminated by GHB incorporation through sweat.
- the calculation of the ratio between the targeted segment and the mean of the others, with the exception of the first.
- the use of “each subject as his own control” (8-13).

References

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