



Department of Health

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DATE: April 6, 2018
TO: Hospitals, Emergency Departments, and Urgent Care Centers
FROM: NYSDOH Center for Environmental Health

Health Advisory:

Potential Life-Threatening Vitamin K-Dependent Antagonist Coagulopathy Associated with Synthetic Cannabinoids Use

Please distribute immediately to: Hospitals, Emergency Departments, ICUs, Urgent Care Centers, Medical Director, and Nursing Director

Summary:

- The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has been notified of an outbreak of patients presenting to Emergency Departments in other states with serious unexplained bleeding. Laboratory investigation has confirmed that some of these patients were exposed to brodifacoum, a long-acting anti-coagulant found in rat poison. This exposure is believed to have come from synthetic cannabinoids contaminated with brodifacoum.

What are the Clinical Signs of Coagulopathy?

Clinical signs of coagulopathy include bruising, nosebleeds, bleeding gums, bleeding disproportionate to injury, vomiting blood, coughing up blood, blood in urine or stool, excessively heavy menstrual bleeding, back or flank pain, altered mental status, feeling faint or fainting, loss of consciousness, and collapse.

What Do Health Care Providers Need to Do?

Healthcare providers should maintain a suspicion for vitamin K-dependent antagonist coagulopathy in patients presenting with clinical signs of coagulopathy, bleeding unrelated to an injury, or bleeding without another explanation and with a possible history of synthetic cannabinoids (e.g., K2, Spice, and AK47) use; some patients may not divulge use of synthetic cannabinoids. These patients should be screened for vitamin K-dependent antagonist coagulopathy by checking their coagulation profile (e.g., international normalized ratio (INR) and prothrombin time (PT)).

When cases of suspected vitamin K-dependent antagonist coagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoids use are identified:

- Contact your local Poison Information Center (1-800-222-1222) for questions on diagnostic testing and management of these patients.
- Report suspected cases to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) by calling the Duty Officer (1-866-881-2809).