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Editorial Office Address

Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Third Floor, Library Building, Seth G S Medical College & KEM Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Pin-400 012. Email id: mlameditor@gmail.com Phone: 022-24107620 Mobile No. +91-9423016325.



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Original Review Article

Date Rape Drugs- A Review

Arpan Mazumder^a, A J Patowary^{b*}

^aAssistant Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine, Silchar Medical College & Hospital, Silchar, Cachar, Assam, India. Pin-788014.

^bProfessor and Head, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS), Shilong, Meghalaya, India. Pin-793018.

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Abstract

Date Rape Drug refers to a drug that can be used to assist in the commission of a sexual assault, such as rape. With the modernization the number of late-night parties and club parties are also increasing resulting in increasing incidence of sexual abuse cases. In this present review article, some of the date rape drugs and a few measures to decrease the incidence of female sexual abuse cases are discussed.

1. Introduction

The relationship between man and woman is from the beginning of the civilization, however, whenever there is force or fraudulent means are used, the problems started.

Rape is one of such heinous crime.

In India, the section 375 IPC describes Rape and if we analyze the clauses it may be described as follows:

A man is said to commit rape who has sexual intercourse with a women under the circumstances falling under any of the following descriptions:

Firstly, against her will.

Secondly, without her consent.

Thirdly, with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death, or of hurt.

Fourthly, with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married.

Fifthly, with her consent, when, at the time of giving such consent, by reason of unsoundness of mind or

intoxication or the administration by him personally or through another of any stupefying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent.

Sixthly, with or without her consent, when she is under 18 years of age.^{1,2,3,4}

So, it is evident that the consent given by an adult woman for the sexual act must be a conscious one, free of any obligation, without fear or threat and any deviation from the above can be treated as an act of rape on the woman. There are situations when man used to use some means where the woman may be compelled to take part in the sexual act, though she may not be willing or have given consent of her own.

2. Date Rape Drug:

These are the drugs that are used to assist in committing a sexual assault on a woman which may amount to rape. Many agents may be used to facilitate rape which have sedative, hypnotic, dissociative and/or amnesic effects and can be added

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***Corresponding author:** Dr A J Patowary, Professor & Head, Department of Forensic Medicine, North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEGRHIMS), Shilong, Meghalaya, India. Pin-793018. Email: drajpatowary@gmail.com (M): +91- 9435018221

to a food or drink without the knowledge of the victim. The act of adding such substances to drinks is known as DRINK SPIKING. Many a time these spiking agents are used for personal amusement or theft or sexual assault.^{5,6}

TYPES OF DRUGS:

The three most commonly used drugs for date rape are alcohol, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid), and benzodiazepines such as Flunitrazepam, also known as Rohypnol or Roofies.^{5,6,7,8,9} However an American study (1997) showed that alcohol is the most common drug used in cases of assisted sexual assault.^{5,6}

ALCOHOL: Alcohol is the most commonly used date rape drug. The reason may be because of the fact that it is readily available legally in all over the globe. Many assailants use alcohol because many a time their victims willingly take it and can be encouraged to drink enough to lose inhibitions or consciousness. Even if the victim agrees to sexual act, the act may be considered rape in some jurisdictions if the victims judgment was impaired or incapacitated by alcohol.⁵

GAMMA HYDROXY BUTYRIC ACID (also known as liquid E): Its effects are very similar to alcohol. GHB and its analogues mix well in water and are odorless. They are salty in taste but are indiscernible when dissolved in beverages such as soft drinks, liquor etc. In human body the analogues are rapidly converted to GHB. In presence of alcohol or any other sedatives, its effect is amplified and many people have died after consuming GHB or its analogues, in combination with alcohol or other sedatives.

BENZODIAZEPINE (BZP): BZPs are used to treat anxiety, panic attack, insomnias and several other conditions. Some BZPs used to treat insomnia possess strong sedative, motor impairing and amnesic effects. The most commonly encountered name in this group is Rohipnol. Though Rohypnol is often cited as a date rape drug because of its high potency, strong effects and the ability to cause strong amnesia during its duration of action, investigations into its actual use as date rape drug have contraindicated popular belief.⁷

Rohypnol is the brand name of flunitrazepam, and is one of the benzodiazepine class of drugs. It is used in the short-term treatment of sleep disorders. It is 10 times more potent than diazepam. It is one of the common drugs used as the

date rape drug because of the fact that it is colorless, odorless and tasteless – so considered an ideal drug for spiking drinks undetected – to achieve sedation or euphoria in approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Several cases were report about Rohypnol being given to women without their consent in order to remove their inhibitions.⁸ It has been implicated in several date rape cases in the US, although there is no confirmed case of it being used in sexual assault cases in the UK.

This use of this drug made the Hoffman-Roche, the company manufacturing Rohipnol, to add a blue dye to its formula in January 1998 so that when it is added to any drink it turns blue, and it is slower to dissolve.

The street names for Rohypnol include rophies, ropies, ruffies, roofies, roche, R-2, mexican valium, rib, and rope. Users report mixing it with beer to enhance the feeling of drunkenness, and it has been reported to be used in combination with marijuana and cocaine, as well as heroin.

Flumazenil is an agent that reverses the effects of Rohypnol. It is a benzodiazepine antagonist. and is used for reversing the severe effects of overdose. However, it needs to be administered by a doctor as it is an injection.^{4,5}

3. Legal Issues

In most parts of the world, whether or not a drug was used is irrelevant to the issue of whether a particular incident is rape or not. The legal definition of rape in countries such as U.S. also covers an aspect of lack of consent. When the victim is unable to say 'NO' to intercourse as a consequence of drugging or simply alcohol consumption.

There are many incidences of illegal activities related to the contraband drugs; in one such incident in U.S., Government had to recall about 4.2 million Chinese made aqua dot bad toys. The fact is that toys were coated with some chemicals that once metabolized, converts into the toxic 'date rape drug GHB. The U.S. Government had to recall the toys after some children started to vomit and become comatose after swallowing them.⁹

4. Other Drugs

KETAMIN (Special K, K etc.) – It is an anesthetic agent; high doses can lead to unconsciousness and can leave the user open to assault.

There is also record of use of Dhatura to facilitate sexual assault.¹

CLUB DRUGS: These are drugs that are generally used in partying situations such as clubs, big house parties etc. which usually refers to Ecstasy (E or MDMA), GHB, Cocaine, Crystal Meth, Ketamine etc.⁶ These are the agents which are used by the individuals to enhance so called enjoyment of the parties and may a time they are being abused for procuring the undue advantages on women, may a time may amount to rape on the woman.

5. Protection:

The simple steps should be followed: Simple steps to keep yourself and your friends safe at places of bar, restaurant or in any public setting are as follows:

- Never leave your drink unattended.
- Do not accept open-container drinks from anyone but a bartender or server. When you are accepting a drink, you must make sure that it is from an unopened container or you open the container yourself.
- Be wary about accepting drinks from anyone you do not know well or long enough to trust.
- Attend parties or visit bars with a group of friends, arranging beforehand to watch each other's drinks.
- If you arrive as a group, leave as a group.
- Watch out for your friends. If you noticed that a friend is showing symptoms of date-rape drug ingestion, you need to seek medical attention immediately.
- Notify other females you know about the effects of these dangerous drugs.
- If you think that you have been a victim, notify the authorities immediately^{3,8}

In case of any suspected sexual assault on a woman, the following are to be maintained:

If the woman is ill or injured, call for help or go to a hospital emergency department for treatment.

In case the woman wants to report the incident, which is always advisable in such situations, call the police. In such an event, it becomes utmost essential to preserve the evidence, and to do so, – do not shower, change clothes, or brush your teeth – until a proper medico-legal examination is done to collect all the evidences. Urine examination will be helpful in detection of such drug/ intoxicant hence, avoid urination until medical/legal evidence is being collected at the hospital. It is always to be remember

that sooner you get to the hospital, the more likely the drug will be found in your system.

6. Conclusion

In today's world though we think that women are safer than earlier, the actual scenario remains the same, infect it is getting worse day by day. While human civilization is advancing, people are becoming more and more civilized, the number of cases of female abuse is also in rise.

The government should put more limitations on selling these drugs. The chemists should give the drugs on prescription of a registered medical practitioner only.

The survivor should be examined at the earliest so that no evidence is lost; treatment if require should be started immediately which includes treatment for the mental as well as the physical trauma due to the assault. The society should always play a supportive role, so that the woman never fills like a deserter.

The hotels and restaurants must follow safety rules strictly, particularly so in the parties.

Lastly though our cultural and social bonding teach us to respect women in all spheres but in reality, for many so called civilized and educated members of the society, women are always to be suppressed and to be dominated by men in the society and that is root cause of such assault and criminal activates against women in society. So, to conclude respect the women, as they deserve it, only the change in the perception of men supremacy can lead to a safe environment woman in the society.

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