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May 31, 2018
For Immediate Release

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Life-Threatening Bleeding Associated with Contaminated Synthetic Cannabinoids Use in Various U.S. states

Oneida County Health Department Shares Information on CDC Health Advisory

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a health advisory on May 25, 2018 regarding a multistate outbreak of coagulopathy from exposure to synthetic cannabinoid products containing a vitamin K-dependent antagonist agent known as brodifacoum.

In March 2018, the Illinois Department of Health reported cases of patients experiencing unexplained bleeding after use of synthetic cannabinoids. Testing of those patients found the presence of brodifacoum which is a vitamin K-dependent antagonist that is used in rat poison.

There have been 202 cases of vitamin K-dependent antagonist coagulopathy associated with synthetic cannabinoid use, including five deaths reported to the CDC. Patients have been identified in nine states so far, including, Illinois, Maryland, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

There are hundreds of different synthetic cannabinoid chemicals that are manufactured and sold. New ones with unknown health risks become available each year. These chemicals are called cannabinoids because they act on the same brain cell receptors as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main active ingredient in marijuana. Synthetic cannabinoids can affect the brain in different ways compared to marijuana. Synthetic cannabinoids or synthetic marijuana is used in a variety of ways, including: sprayed onto plant material and smoked; used in e-cigarettes; or ingested when added to herbal tea or food. Adverse effects of synthetic marijuana include: agitation, confusion, hallucinations, delusions, tachypnea, tachycardia, and gastrointestinal distress.

The CDC recommends that people do not use synthetic cannabinoids. These are dangerous because it is impossible to know for sure what chemicals are in the products, how much they are being exposed to, and how their body will react to the chemicals. The synthetic cannabinoid products associated with this outbreak are especially dangerous because they contain brodifacoum, which is a chemical used as rat poison that can cause uncontrolled bleeding.

Anyone that has used synthetic marijuana in the past three months and are concerned about their health should contact their health care provider. Synthetic marijuana users who develop any unusual bruising or bleeding should seek medical attention immediately.

For more information on Synthetic cannabinoids and their health effects:
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/chemicals/sc/default.html>