

## Researchers tackle designer drug craze

July 16 2012

---

(Medical Xpress) -- President Obama signed a bill into law this week designating certain chemicals found in designer drugs as FDA-controlled substances.

As a result, selling and distributing [bath salts](#), synthetic [marijuana](#) and synthetic [hallucinogens](#) is now a crime just like other [illicit drugs](#). In recent months, many states have taken steps to ban bath salts and other related drugs in light of several attacks believed to have been triggered by these drugs. According to Anthony DeCaprio, director of the Forensic and Analytical Toxicology Facility at FIU's International Forensic Research Institute, bath salts and other [designer drugs](#), which are drugs developed to avoid the provisions of existing drug laws, have been around for a long time.

“MDMA or Ecstasy, for example, was developed back in 1912. Over the years, amateur chemists have been making versions of these drugs on their own, which have never been tested or regulated by FDA or DEA. Now there are hundreds and hundreds of these designer drugs,” DeCaprio said.

The individuals making the drugs can alter the [chemical](#) formula of the drugs to create compounds that are different, only by a few molecules from those banned, to get around [FDA](#) and DEA regulations. However, this new ban also outlaws any compounds that may be produced in the future by altering the chemical formula and producing the same effects as the known compounds.

“We have been conducting research on developing new and better methods for screening for these compounds,” DeCaprio said. “Because it is easy to modify their chemical structures, new drugs are constantly introduced and it is necessary to have validated methods to quantify and identify them.”

Currently, standard testing does not detect the range of compounds that are out there.

“To my knowledge, no forensic toxicology lab in the U.S. or elsewhere is currently capable of routine screening for all of the many hundreds of designer drugs currently available on the street,” DeCaprio said. “This problem is further complicated by the possibility that some of these drugs may be far more potent than known stimulant drugs like methamphetamine or Ecstasy, which makes them even harder to detect and identify.”

Provided by Florida International University

Citation: Researchers tackle designer drug craze (2012, July 16) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-tackle-drug-craze.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.