Hello LIVE REAL Mentors!

You may have heard a lot of “buzz” in the media recently about two different substances: synthetic marijuana and alcoholic energy drinks. This email will provide you some quick facts about each of these substances, as well as a more thorough overview in the attached documents. Additionally, I would like to remind you of the upcoming LIVE REAL Mentor Train the Trainer session, available to any mentors interested in learning how to facilitate future LRM training sessions. The Train the Trainer session is taking place on Wednesday, November 10th from 11am – 1pm. Lunch will be provided to attendees. Please RSVP to Erika.Beseler@ndsu.edu by this Thursday, November 4th if you are planning to attend.

**Synthetic Marijuana Quick Facts:**

Synthetic marijuana (also known as K2 or Spice) is a mixture of dried leaves from traditional herbal plants that have been sprayed with a synthetic cannabinoid agent that produces a high similar to that of smoking marijuana. Because these chemicals are not similar in structure to THC (the active ingredient in marijuana), they are therefore not listed as controlled substances. By using these chemicals in the synthetic marijuana mixtures, manufacturers are able to legally market their products in the United States. It sells for approximately $30-40 per three-gram bag, which is comparable in cost to marijuana, and is typically marketed as incense that is not for human consumption.

Due to the unpredictability and general lack of knowledge regarding the long-term side effects of the use of synthetic marijuana, thirteen states, including North Dakota, have outlawed the sale and use of the substance. In North Dakota, the legal actions taken are the same as those taken for marijuana or possession of a controlled substance. The severity of the charge depends on the amount of synthetic marijuana an individual has in their possession.

It is generally reported that smoking synthetic marijuana products will produce a high similar to smoking marijuana, but one that does not last as long. Short term side effects may include intense hallucinations, severe agitation, vomiting, elevated heart rate and blood pressure, tremors and seizures, anxiety, numbness and tingling, and a pale appearance.

There have been no scientific studies conducted on the extended effects that synthetic cannabinoids may have on the body and brain, and therefore the long-term effects of use of these chemicals are completely unknown.

**Alcoholic Energy Drink Quick Facts:**

Alcoholic energy drinks are receiving national media attention due to the high occurrence of alcohol-related injuries associated with consumption. Alcohol energy drinks typically contain 12% alcohol by volume, caffeine, carbonation, and sugar. There are about 25 or more alcoholic energy drinks available on the market. One popular brand, Four Loko, is sold in a 23.5 oz. can and comes in flavors that mask the taste of alcohol, such as grape and fruit punch. Due to the high alcohol content, drinking one Four Loko is equal to approximately 5 standard drinks, the caffeine in 3-4 cans of Coke, and has an estimated 600-800 calories per can. Each can sells for about $2.50.
The depressant effects of the alcohol include slowing down respiration and heart rate. However, the stimulating effects of caffeine can mask the effects of the alcohol consumed, making it more likely that an individual will drink more than someone who drinks only alcohol. This is very dangerous, as being able to feel the effects of intoxication (such as loss of coordination, vomiting, etc.) is the body’s way of avoiding doses of alcohol that may be fatal. Four Loko has caused students to experience walking black-outs, anxiety, heart palpitations, psychosis-like episodes, alcohol overdose, and other dangerous consequences.

Due to the increased likelihood of injury that students experience when mixing alcohol with caffeine, some campuses have banned alcoholic energy drinks in order to thoroughly examine the risks associated with the drinks. The Food and Drug Administration has also received requests to examine whether the use of caffeine in alcoholic beverages is safe.

Again, please see the attached documents for a more thorough overview of synthetic marijuana and alcoholic energy drinks. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me. Have a great week!

Best,
Erika