Drugged driving in Norway with focus on medicinal drugs

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What do we know about drugs and traffic accident risks?

- Several investigations (psychomotor tests, driving in simulator and real traffic, epidemiological studies) have been published pointing out that:
- several drugs (like alcohol) as a risk factor when combined with driving
- However: The knowledge is lower compared with similar investigation on alcohol

- Benzodiazepiner, zopiclon, others
  - Therapeutic use ++
  - High dose level use (abuse) +++
- Cyclic antidepressant
  - Therapeutic starting treatment +
- Antihistamines (sedative effects)
  - Therapeutic starting treatment ++
- Opioider
  - Therapeutic starting treatment ++
  - Therapeutic - after tolerance +
  - High dose level use (abuse) ++
- Stimulant
  - Therapeutic use +
  - High dose level use (abuse) ++

High risk +++ Considerable risk ++ Some risk +

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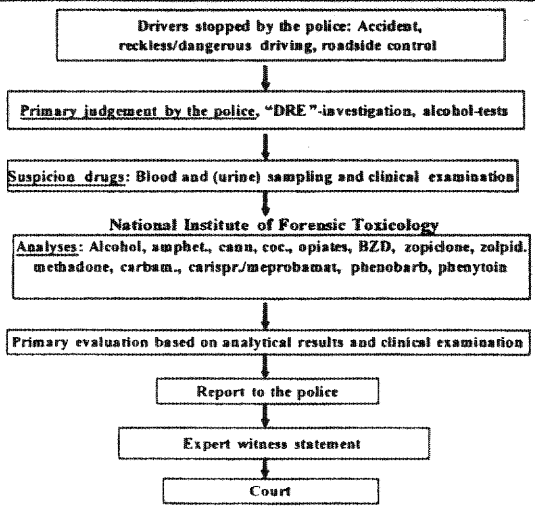
Norwegian Road Traffic Act

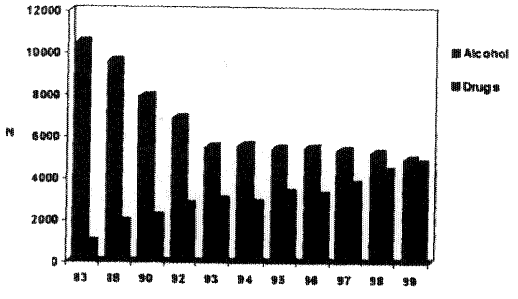
The Norwegian Road Traffic Act:

No one must drive or attempt to drive a motor vehicle when he is under the **influence** of alcohol (not sober) or **some other intoxicating or narcotic agent.** If he has a larger content of alcohol in his blood than 0.2 pro mille or if he has in his body an amount of alcohol which may result in such alcohol content in his blood, or the content of alcohol in his breath exceeds 0.1 milligrams per liter of air, he shall in any case be deemed to be under the influence of alcohol (not sober) for the purpose of this Act.

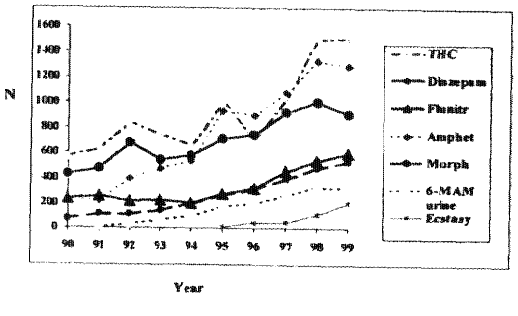
Handling of drugged driving in Norway



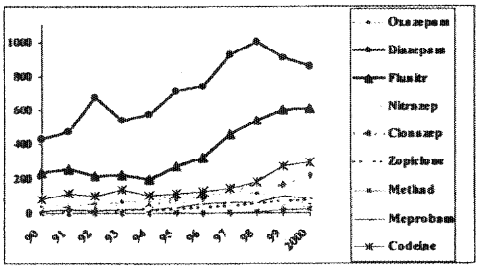
The background: Number of apprehended drivers in Norway due to alcohol or DRUGS



The most frequently detected drugs among apprehended drugged drivers in Norway



The most frequently detected medicinal drugs among drugged drivers in Norway (1990 - 2000)



Norw. Accid. drivers (n=394): BZD most freq. detect. (14%) after alcohol

Norw. fatal single accid. drivers (n=79): BZD most freq. detect (8 %) after alcohol

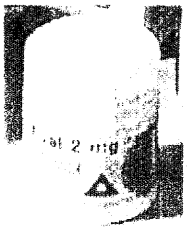
Who are the drivers

- man - 20 - 35 years
- misusing illegal drugs
- misusing psychoactive prescribed drugs above recommended therapeutic levels -
- freq. multi-drug users e.g using illegal drugs/ prescribed drugs/ alcohol
- freq. with earlier arrests - and/or rearrested for impaired driving
- high mortality (25 x normal population - same age group)

Available information about medicinal drugs and traffic risks

- Drugs packages with red triangle
- Package inserts: Both for drugs with red triangle and other drugs which may affect driving during start period of treatment
- Information brochure at the pharmacies - should be distributed to the patients (not always done)
- Oral information by the prescribing physician and pharmacist (should be better)
- Special literature available in Norw. Drug Handbooks for physicians and pharmacists
- Education: Included during education courses for physicians and pharmacists

Red triangle on medicinal drugs affencting driving performance



Packages contaning medicinal drugs affecting driving performance - have been warned with red triangle for more than 20 years in Norway and other Nordic countries.

Guidelines for Driving license

- Drivers misusing alcohol, illegal drugs or high doses psychoactive medicinal drugs should not be allowed to keep their driving license
- May be the consequences after confirmation according to the "Drug use law" - (could be used more frequently by the police)
- Special guidelines for patients on methadone treatment programs