

1 Novel psychoactive practices: 2 inhalation of snake venom mixed 3 with cannabis

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11 Dear Editor,

Psychoactive drugs have been used for recreational purposes since ancient times. Among them, alcohol, opioids, and cannabinoids are the most common ones [1]. In India, in addition to these common substances, infrequent practices utilizing animal-derived toxins for intoxication have also been reported, although they are uncommon and inadequately documented. Snake venom, mainly linked to inadvertent envenomation, has been informally connected to mood changes, pain relief, fatigue, and changes in perception [2]. However, we present a case report detailing an atypical instance of reported snake venom inhalation combined with cannabis, emphasizing a potentially dangerous mode of exposure and the ramifications for mental health care.

A 56-year-old male, unskilled worker, presented with progressive apathy, amotivation, social withdrawal, and functional decline with a 5-year history of cannabis use in dependence pattern. Over the last 3–4 years, he reported using cannabis mixed with snake venom and smoking it on a daily basis, acquiring the venom from a local snake charmer. With plain cannabis, he reported the usual effects of intoxication, including relaxation, altered perception, mild euphoria, increased appetite, and sleepiness. In contrast, cannabis mixed with snake venom produced intense euphoria, marked muscle relaxation, and prolonged sleep lasting several hours.

38 Over the past two years, he developed severe apathy,
39 anhedonia, decreased libido, reduced social interaction,
40 and occupational dysfunction, leading to cessation of
41 work. He was treated elsewhere for suspected depression
42 with Escitalopram 20 mg once a day and Lithium 300
43 mg twice daily, without benefit, and without historical

depressive cognitions. On presentation, he exhibited bradykinesia, impaired attention and concentration, dull affect, and urinary incontinence for one year. He was initiated on Olanzapine 5 mg (as cognitive decline was suspected in the background of underlying negative symptoms of psychosis) and cerebroprotective agents (cerebroprotein, Ginkgo biloba, and L-carnosine), referred to neurology, and advised MRI brain, following which the patient was lost to follow-up.

This case exemplifies an atypical pattern of substance use, characterized by the presumed inhalation of snake venom combined with cannabis, thereby broadening the range of innovative intoxicant practices. Some reports say that snake venom is being used instead of alcohol and opioids because people think it makes them feel drunk and less anxious in some social and cultural settings [2,3]. Although the specific species involved in this case could not be definitively identified, previous reports indicate that venom from neurotoxic snakes, such as cobras or kraits [4] is most frequently associated. While recreational effects may motivate ongoing usage, the patient's ensuing neurobehavioral deterioration elicits apprehension regarding possible enduring neurological consequences, although it is difficult to establish a causal relationship with this report. Snake envenomation is known to cause neurological and neuro-ophthalmological symptoms, especially in neurotoxic species. Ptosis is frequently observed in conjunction with respiratory paralysis, limb weakness, dysphasia, and visual disturbances; most cases resolve with treatment without enduring impairments [5]. This case report thus serves to shed light on newer modalities of substance use and the need to be vigilant of the

76	presentation and long-term side effects of snake venom		
77	inhalation.		
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