1 May 2020

Ms Andrea Eng
Manager Regulatory Practice and Analysis
Ministry of Health
Molesworth Street
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By email: eacd@health.govt.nz

Kia ora Ms Eng

Re: Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 – Proposed classification of specified fentanyl analogues and synthetic cannabinoids

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) is a membership organisation that prepares doctors to be medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises Government on mental health care.

Tu Te Akaaka Roa - The New Zealand National Committee and the New Zealand Faculty for Addiction Psychiatry welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed classifications of fentanyl analogues and synthetic cannabinoids.

Proposed Classification of fentanyl analogues
The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) proposes to schedule fentanyl analogues as Class A controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. This policy will tighten the prescribing and management of fentanyl analogues.

The RANZCP supports a more restrictive classification of fentanyl analogues. We endorse the Ministry’s reclassification of these substances as Class A controlled drugs.

The Ministry considers that these substances have a very high risk of harm. We concur with the Ministry as we point to overseas evidence that clearly demonstrates that dependency on Fentanyl and other legal medicines is increasing. In our view it would be prudent for New Zealand to limit the access to medicines that can be potentially addictive. We note that Fentanyl has addictive properties similar to heroin and other opioids. We are also concerned that a report from the United Kingdom reports an increasing prevalence in deaths associated with Fentanyl1. For these reasons we believe the proposal is sensible and may be one of levers to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with this powerful synthetic opioid.

Proposed Classification of synthetic cannabinoids
We understand that the proposed amendment, changing the classification of synthetic cannabis to a class B1 will be implemented to curtail importation, manufacture and supply.

We note that this proposal is related to the following substances: CUMYL-4CN-BINACA, ADB-FUBINACA, ADB-CHMINICA, 5F-MDMB-PICA and NM-2201.

These substances are commonly known under the umbrella term ‘synthetic cannabis’ and some of these substances being considered under the proposal are not dissimilar from AMB-Fubinaca and 5F-ADB which are Class A substances.
We advocate that all synthetic cannabinoids are classified as Class A substances. Tighter restrictions may reduce the availability of these substances, resulting in declining usage and fewer people presenting within the public health system with induced harm from these toxic substances. Some synthetic compounds have triggered a higher presentation of mental illnesses such as agitation, paranoia, depression, or psychosis so we remain concerned about the impact these potent substances may have on the wider community.

The RANZCP supports a more restrictive classification of synthetic cannabinoids. We consider these substances should be Class A controlled drugs rather than Class B1.

**General Comments**

Alongside the implementation of the reclassification regime we ask that the Ministry continues their work to understand the prevalence and impact of these harmful substances on segments of our population. We consider that the continued research is required so we learn more about the impact of these substances, enabling us to develop effective responses, including support for evidenced-based treatment services, for those consumers experiencing significant harm. We would be available to assist the Ministry in progressing this kaupapa.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue relating to controlled drugs under Misuse of Drugs Act 1975.

In summary, we welcome the policy change relating to the classification of fentanyl analogues as Class A controlled drugs as we believe it will reduce the harm associated with these substances.

We advocate that synthetic cannabinoids are also classified as Class A controlled drugs. There is evidence that they cause significant harm and it may also cause confusion within the sector as AMB-FUBINACA and 5F-ADB are currently Class A controlled drugs.

If you have any further questions regarding this submission please contact Rosemary Matthews, National Manager, New Zealand, on 04 472 7265 or by email Rosemary.Matthews@ranzcp.org.

Ngā mihi

Dr Susanna Galea – Singer
Treasurer, Tu Te Akaaka Roa - New Zealand National Committee and Chair, New Zealand Committee for Faculty of Addiction Psychiatry

**References**

1 National Crime Agency, United Kingdom. Recent Deaths Possibly Linked to fentanyl. 2017. Available at https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/7-recent-deaths-possibly-linked-to-fentanyl/file
