Drug-facilitated Rape

Perpetrators have long used a variety of drugs to sedate victims, rendering them incapable of resisting and, in some cases, incapable of clearly remembering the rape event. Drug-facilitated rape can be defined as sexual assault made easier by the offender’s use of an “anesthesia” type drug that renders the victim physically incapacitated or helpless and unable to give consent to sexual activity. Whether the victim is unwittingly administered the drug or willingly ingests it for recreational use is irrelevant. The victim is unable to consciously consent to sexual acts.

While much has been portrayed in the media about “date rape drugs” such as Rohypnol and GHB, the most common drug used to facilitate rape is alcohol. College students in the Midwest are far more likely to be victims of alcohol-facilitated rape than other drug-facilitated rape. In an effort to promote awareness, this document will provide basic information on drugs used by perpetrators to facilitate rape.

Alcohol

Alcohol, an intoxicating beverage, is the most widely used drug to facilitate rape. Initial use of alcohol causes feelings of relaxation and euphoria. As more alcohol is consumed, the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) increases causing greater mental and physical impairment. At a minimum, alcohol impairs judgment of both people and situations. Severe impairment includes memory loss and passing out. Alcohol, legally available in the U.S., is commonly used by legal-age drinkers to entice or attract underage drinkers to social settings. Such settings are not typically considered high-risk environments.

Antihistamines (such as Benadryl)

Antihistamines are a group of synthetic drugs. Less-serious side effects are common, the most notable being drowsiness. Some antihistamines possess sedative action and may impair a person’s performance while driving. Most importantly, however, antihistamines enhance the effects of alcohol and other depressant drugs that act on the central nervous system.

Rohypnol (Roofies)

Rohypnol is the trade name for the drug flunitrazepam, a benzodiazepine (central nervous system depressant) like Valium, yet 10 times more potent. Rohypnol is a small white tablet that dissolved quickly in liquid. It is not manufactured or approved for sale in the United States.

The initial pharmacological effects of Rohypnol appear 15-30 minutes after intake and include impaired memory and judgment, drowsiness, loss of fine motor skills, dizziness, and confusion. The victim may feel unusually intoxicated. Higher doses of Rohypnol may induce amnesia.

GHB (Gamma hydroxybutyrate)

GHB is a light powder or clear liquid which acts powerfully and rapidly upon the central nervous system as a depressant. In liquid form, it is clear, odorless, tasteless, and almost undetectable. Street names for GHB include Liquid Ecstacy, Liquid X, and Grievous Bodily Harm.

Small doses of GHB can cause loss of muscle tone and reduced inhibitions. Increased doses cause a strong feeling of relaxation and slows the heart rate and respiration. GHB interferes with blood circulation, motor coordination, and balance. At stronger doses, pronounced interference with motor and speech control occurs. When mixed with alcohol, the depressant effects of GHB are enhanced. This can lead to respiratory depression, unconsciousness, coma, and overdose.

Ketamine (Special K, Vitamin K, K)

Ketamine is used mainly by veterinarians as an animal tranquilizer. It comes in powder form which is snorted, smoked or dissolved in liquid. It can also be injected. Ketamine may cause nausea, difficulty communicating, fragmentation, feeling removed from the body, and amnesia. Many times, this drug will render the victim aware but temporarily paralyzed.