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Scientology Drug Prevention Effort Annual Review: Synthetic Drugs an Urgent Issue

Church of Scientology adds synthetic drugs component to the drug education initiative it supports

The Church of Scientology International has just completed its annual review of the Truth About Drugs, the drug education and prevention initiative it supports. This review is carried out each October to assess results and pinpoint new issues.

These results are incorporated into the Church's National Substance Abuse Awareness Month and National Red Ribbon Week drug education and drug prevention activities in the United States and the Church's drug education initiative in countries throughout the world.

In 2013, the specter of new synthetic drugs has emerged as the most important challenge to address.

“The onslaught of new synthetic has created an entirely new landscape that affects young people everywhere,” said Scientology spokesperson Bob Adams.

Also known as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), synthetic drugs are created by slightly altering the chemical structure of illegal hallucinogens or narcotic substances. Because these drugs are not identical to banned substances, they are sold and used under the radar in most countries. Their effects are as devastating as the drugs they resemble—or worse.

“A change of a molecule or two to a banned drug is sometimes enough to make a new and legal alternative,” said co-chair of the U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, Senator Charles E. Grassley, in a hearing in September 2013.

Widely available through the Internet, synthetics are readily accessible practically anywhere in the world to today’s tech-savvy youth who remain oblivious to the consequences of consuming them.

There has been [a 300 percent increase](#) in poison centers in the United States responding to calls relating to synthetic drugs and 60 percent of the cases involved patients 25 years old or younger, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

This is an epidemic infecting countries throughout the world. The 2013 World Drug Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) traced the problem to countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas,

Africa and Oceania—70 countries and territories representing 88 percent of those responding to the annual UNODC survey.

This year, drug education volunteers from the Church of Scientology of Tokyo conducted a survey of some 6,000 middle school and high school students. Although 75 percent of those surveyed thought synthetic drugs should not be used, 13 percent thought individuals should be free to decide to use them, and 5.7 percent thought it was perfectly alright to consume these drugs as long as they were not banned.

“These results are consistent with what we have observed in other countries, hence the need to expand our program to cover these substances.” said Adams. “Our volunteers are addressing this issue in drug education lectures and we are supporting the development of educational resources to make factual information about these substances and their devastating effects broadly available.”

Last October, the Church of Scientology published a new brochure, *How We Help—The Truth About Drugs, Creating a Drug-Free World*, to meet requests for more information about the drug education and prevention initiative it supports. Over the past year, nearly 8 million copies of *The Truth About Drugs* booklets have been distributed. Scientology Church and Mission volunteers have conducted more than 4,300 drug education and prevention activities in 27 countries, including:

- Organizing nationwide anti-drug “marathons” in the United Kingdom, Hungary, Russia and the Czech Republic;

- Training community leaders and religious groups to conduct effective drug education for their groups and congregations;
- Conducting drug awareness street information booths and distribution events and rallies;
- Partnering with law enforcement agencies, halfway houses, and correctional facilities;
- And making the full array of Truth About Drugs educational materials available through every Scientology Church and Mission.

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Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard wrote, "The planet has hit a barrier which prevents any widespread social progress—drugs and other biochemical substances. These can put people into a condition which not only prohibits and destroys physical health but which can prevent any stable advancement in mental or spiritual well-being."



Some 13 percent of Japanese students surveyed by Scientologists in Japan were complacent about consumption of synthetic drugs, a trend that has proven true in other countries. The Church of Scientology is supporting development of educational resources to help inform youth of the dangers of these drugs.