

USE OF ENERGY DRINKS IN ASSOCIATION WITH ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IN A COHORT OF STUDENTS OF THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MESSINA

Oteri A, Salvo F, Caputi AP, Calapai G

Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine and Pharmacology, University of Messina

Energy Drinks (ED) are a widely used group of beverages known for their stimulant effects on central nervous system (CNS). The main components of ED are caffeine, taurine, carbohydrates, glucuronolactone, inositol, niacin, pantenol and beta complex vitamins.

Studies evaluating the effects of ED describe improvements in attention and/or reaction times and indices of alertness. Moreover, it has been shown that a combination of caffeine and glucose, fundamental constituents of ED, can ameliorate deficits in cognitive performance and subjective fatigue during extended periods of cognitive demand. The associated ingestion of alcohol and ED has recently been observed to have become rapidly popular. With the aim to know the habits and the uses of students, we administered a questionnaire containing questions regarding ED drinking alone or in combination with alcoholic beverages.

Five hundred (500) students of the School of Medicine of the University of Messina were interviewed and 450 compiled the questionnaire. The 57% of students declared to use ED. The great part of users (85 %) associate frequently ED and alcohol. In particular, 36% of ED+alcohol users have used ED+alcohol more than tree times in the last month. The 48% of ED+alcohol users declared to intake the association one time a night, the 21% two times a night and the 8% three or more times a night.

Our data suggest that the association of ED+alcohol is very popular among students. In our opinion, this behaviour can be dangerous. In fact, the combination of ED+alcoholic drinks can reduce adversive symptoms of alcohol intoxication including depressant effects. As consequence, users of ED+ alcoholic beverages might have a subjective sensation of reduced intoxication, thus increasing the probability of accidents and/or favouring the possibility of development of alcohol dependence.