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BUYING "LEGAL HIGHS" ONLINE: A PIG IN A POKE?

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**Introduction:** Legal drugs are changing the standards of drug consumption. These substances, labelled 'not for human consumption' are sold as incense, bath salts or pills, tricking sanitary authorities and Food and Drug Administration. Despite the absence of clinical trials, they grant a feeling of safety by being freely sold over the internet and smart-shops, and by ending the fear of control, since medical analyzes do not detect them. This makes them appealing and their popularity is steadily growing.

**Objective:** The authors aim to describe the results of analysis made to several legal drugs samples available online and its potential implications.

**Methods:** Review of PubMed' studies between 2010 e 2012, using as key-words: 'legal drugs' and 'purchase online legal highs'.

**Results:** Studies of substance labeling found a lack of information, since 81,9% of the analyzed products did not report side effects and 86,3% did not specify medical interactions. A study done six months after mephedrone's prohibition in the U.K., showed that 62,5% of products still presented this substance, as well as unlisted components. Three subsequent studies revealed that the majority of the drugs listed the active principle on the label, but a significant percentage also showed unlisted substances.

**Conclusions:** In addition to the dangerous effects and interactions of the unlisted substances, consumers and sellers, misled by the nomenclature 'legal', may be committing an illegality when buying these drugs. Despite governmental efforts, the gap between the identification of a potentially harmful substance and its prohibition, makes difficult to prevent this potential flagellum.