



LETTERS

PREGABALIN AND GABAPENTIN

Misuse of gabapentin and pregabalin may be underestimated

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Our data support the government's decision to reclassify pregabalin and gabapentin to class C controlled substances.¹

In the toxicology unit at Imperial College London we conduct toxicology analysis on behalf of coroners throughout London and the South East, handling roughly 2500 cases a year. In January 2016 analysis for pregabalin and gabapentin was introduced for all coroners' cases (aged over 16) that require a general drugs screen, in response to the growing concern over the misuse of pregabalin and gabapentin reported by Public Health England in 2014² and the rising number of deaths with these drugs recorded on the death certificate.³ Since the start of the screening programme gabapentin, pregabalin, or both, have been regularly detected, primarily in combination with other drugs and often unexpectedly.

Many laboratories screen selectively for gabapentin and pregabalin in postmortem cases owing to limited funds or regulations/accreditation.^{4,5} This means that the number of gabapentin and pregabalin deaths may be underestimated.

In view of our findings to date, we recommend that toxicological screening for coroners' cases should routinely include pregabalin and gabapentin to investigate the extent of their misuse.

Competing interests: None declared.

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- 5 Eastwood JA, Davison E. Pregabalin concentrations in post-mortem blood-A two year study. *Forensic Sci Int* 2016;359:197-201. doi:10.1016/j.forsciint.2016.05.033 pmid:27295075.

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