



Photograph courtesy of Ampath

Internal data compiled from drug screening results over a 12-month period (2016) indicate that cannabis remains the drug of choice amongst workers and the general public with 22% non-negative results on the screening test (Figure 2).

Employers are dealing with issues of suspected substance abuse on a regular basis, facing excuses such as 'it's from last night' or 'it's prescription medicine'. Employers must keep in mind that their function is to ensure that the worker is fit for duty, irrespective of whether the substance is prescribed or illicit. Our patient statistics show that 15% of benzodiazepine and 12% of opiate screening tests are non-negative (Figure 2). Opiate confirmatory tests show that 99% of non-negative results indicate the presence of codeine or morphine, implying that prescribed medication is frequently used during a work period. (Figure 2.)

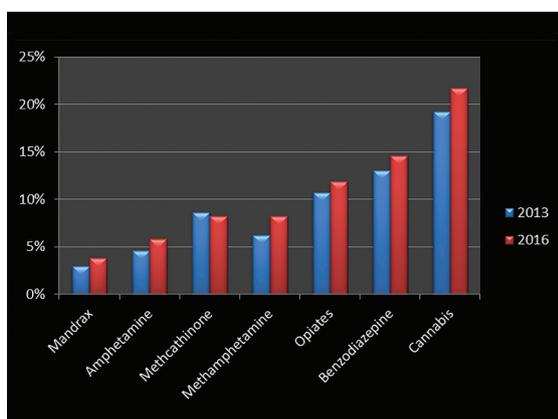


Figure 2. Comparison between non-negative results of screening tests in 2013 and 2016

The awareness that the abuse of a substance may affect the workplace, just as the workplace may affect the substance abuse, is increasing. Considerable attention must therefore be given to substance abuse as a risk factor for occupational injuries and accidents. Employers should institute substance abuse policies in the workplace, which require reliable and robust testing methods and interpretation.

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