Presumptive Testing of Date Rape Drugs in Alcoholic Beverages

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Drug facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) has been defined in the Journal of Legal Medicine as “offences in which victims are subjected to non-consensual sexual acts while they are incapacitated or unconscious due to the effects of alcohol and/or drugs and are therefore prevented from resisting or are unable to consent”. Concern about DFSA is increasing and people are becoming more aware of the risks posed by leaving a drink unattended in a bar, for example. Test kits are now available to the public which claim to be able to detect small amounts of date rape drugs in alcoholic drinks. The aim of this research was to determine how effective two commercial kits were at detecting gamma-hydroxybuterate (GHB), ketamine and flunitrazepam (Rohypnol) in common alcoholic drinks. These tests are sold to provide peace of mind to people drinking in pubs and clubs. They provide the chance to test any drink a person is suspicious of and allows them to discard anything testing positive. This study aims to determine how effective these proprietary kits are at detecting drugs in alcoholic drinks and compared the results they provide with those of traditional presumptive tests.