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To: Wisconsin Hospital Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinicians

From: Jonathan Meiman, MD

Chief Medical Officer for Environmental and Occupational Health

Re: Severe Bleeding Continues Among Synthetic Cannabinoids (“K2” and “Spice”) Users

Patients continue to be hospitalized with severe bleeding after using synthetic cannabinoids, often called “fake weed”, “K2”, and “spice”, which have contained the rat poison brodifacoum. Patients did not have a history of taking warfarin, yet had INR values ranging from 6 to undetectable on presentation. The following guidance was provided earlier to minimize the chance of patients being released too early and suffering adverse outcomes.

In patients who present with bleeding not from an injury and not otherwise explained, including nosebleeds, bleeding of the gums, bruising, vomiting blood, blood in urine or stool, or excessively heavy menstrual bleeding, ED and urgent care providers are encouraged to:

1. Ask patients if they have used synthetic cannabinoids within the last 3 months. Terms for these products may include K2, spice, synthetic marijuana, fake weed, legal weed, and genie.
2. If the patient reports synthetic cannabinoid use or you suspect use, check the patient’s INR before releasing them.

For patients with coagulopathy secondary to brodifacoum poisoning, outpatient follow up is critical. Large doses (≥ 50 mg/day) of Vitamin K1 (phytonadione) for several weeks to months may be required to prevent bleeding. Discharging providers are encouraged to ensure patients will have access to adequate follow up and vitamin K supply prior to discharge.

Please contact the Wisconsin Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 regarding diagnostic testing and treatment regimens for these patients -- and to assist with case tracking. Providers are asked to also report suspect cases to their local health department (LHD). If the LHD is not available, please notify the Wisconsin Department of Health Services at 608-266-1120 during business hours or 608-258-0099 after 4 p.m. on weekdays and weekends.