

Challenges of Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault

REFERENCE: LeBeau MA, Montgomery MA: Challenges of drug-facilitated sexual assault; *Forensic Sci Rev* 22:1; 2010.

ABSTRACT: This article provides the reader with an understanding of the numerous challenges of drug-facilitated sexual assaults (DFSA). The challenges are categorized as follows: the drugs, reporting the crime, evidence collection, and laboratory analysis of specimens. The challenges associated with the drugs used to commit DFSA emphasizes the pharmacological effects of strong central nervous system depressants and how the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of these drugs create difficulties in an investigation. For example, while sexual assaults are generally considered to be a significantly underreported crime, the drug effects further complicate victims' reporting to law enforcement. Any delay in reporting decreases the ability of a laboratory to detect the presence of drugs or metabolites in useful evidentiary specimens such as blood and urine. Finally, differences in instrumentation and mission from one laboratory to the next will impact the ability to provide consistent identification of DFSA drugs or metabolites in these cases. Although the true prevalence of DFSAs will never be fully known, acknowledgment of the many challenges that come with these cases provides insight as to how to improve chances of successfully investigating DFSA allegations.

KEY WORDS: Drug-facilitated sexual assault, drug rape investigation.
