

What's in a Name?

Ever heard of “wet”, “fry”, “illy”, “water”, “formaldehyde”, “embalming fluid” or “amp”? These are substances sold as cigarettes or marijuana joints dipped in liquid, presumably embalming fluid. In reality, these slang terms all refer to various preparations of marijuana containing PCP (phencyclidine). In most instances, the PCP is not mentioned. Worse, the dealer falsely advertises the product and calls it a “PCP-free embalming fluid” joint. No one can pinpoint the origin of this confusing nomenclature. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests that “wet” has spread from poor, inner-city areas to affluent, suburban neighborhoods and college campuses.

Embalming fluid, i.e. formalin or formol, is composed of formaldehyde 37%/wt and methanol 0-5%/vol and does not contain PCP. There is no evidence to support that formaldehyde or methanol are heat stable and therefore absorbable after smoking. There is no evidence to support that either methanol or formaldehyde have psychoactive properties.

Bottom line: ignore street names. Suspicious cannabis joints, whatever their name, should be assumed to contain marijuana and PCP. The patient should be treated accordingly.

Call the **Maryland Poison Center** for more information on PCP exposures:

1-800-222-1222

Suzanne Doyon, MD

DID YOU KNOW THAT..... The Maryland Poison Center has been consulted on a number of cases of Abilify® overdoses??

Abilify® (aripiprazole) is a new antipsychotic. Peak serum levels are seen within 3-5 hours after ingestion. The elimination half-life of the parent drug is >70 hours with an active metabolite half-life of > 90 hours! Abilify® causes significant and prolonged CNS depression with as little as 1-2 tablets in a small child. Call the Maryland Poison Center for help in managing all Abilify® ingestions.

