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### **DROP IN HELPLINE CALLS ABOUT 'P'**

There was a marked drop in the number of calls about P (methamphetamine) to the Alcohol and Drug Helpline in the last three months of 2004, perhaps indicating that people were not as worried about the effects of the drug as in the past, said Cate Kearney, manager of the Alcohol Drug Association of New Zealand, which runs the Helpline.

“The Helpline received 324 calls in the last quarter of last year, compared with 449 over the same period the year before,” she said. “Clearly, fewer people are worried about the effects of P than a year ago. It is interesting to consider whether the drop in calls suggests a drop in methamphetamine use or availability. ”

Kearney said there was undoubtedly quite a high level of fear and anxiety about the highly publicised drug a year ago, reduced in part by the quality information provided by drug treatment services, community groups and health researchers.

P releases high levels of dopamine into the brain, which significantly affects mood and behaviour – with users who are predisposed to violence becoming even more violent under its influence.

P was the only drug to show a drop in caller numbers, however. Kearney said that there was quite a big increase in calls about cannabis and solvents, as well as ordinary amphetamines and opioids.

“The pre-Christmas period also showed a rise in the number of calls from people concerned about alcohol use – either their own or of someone close to them compared to the same period in 2003,” she said.

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