

Citizens Assembly on Drug Use

Dublin, 30th September 2023

Drugs and Medicines Use: A Critical Issue for Road Safety and Forensic Medicine in a Public Health Context

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AN TSEIRBHÍS CHRÓINÉARA
CORONER SERVICE

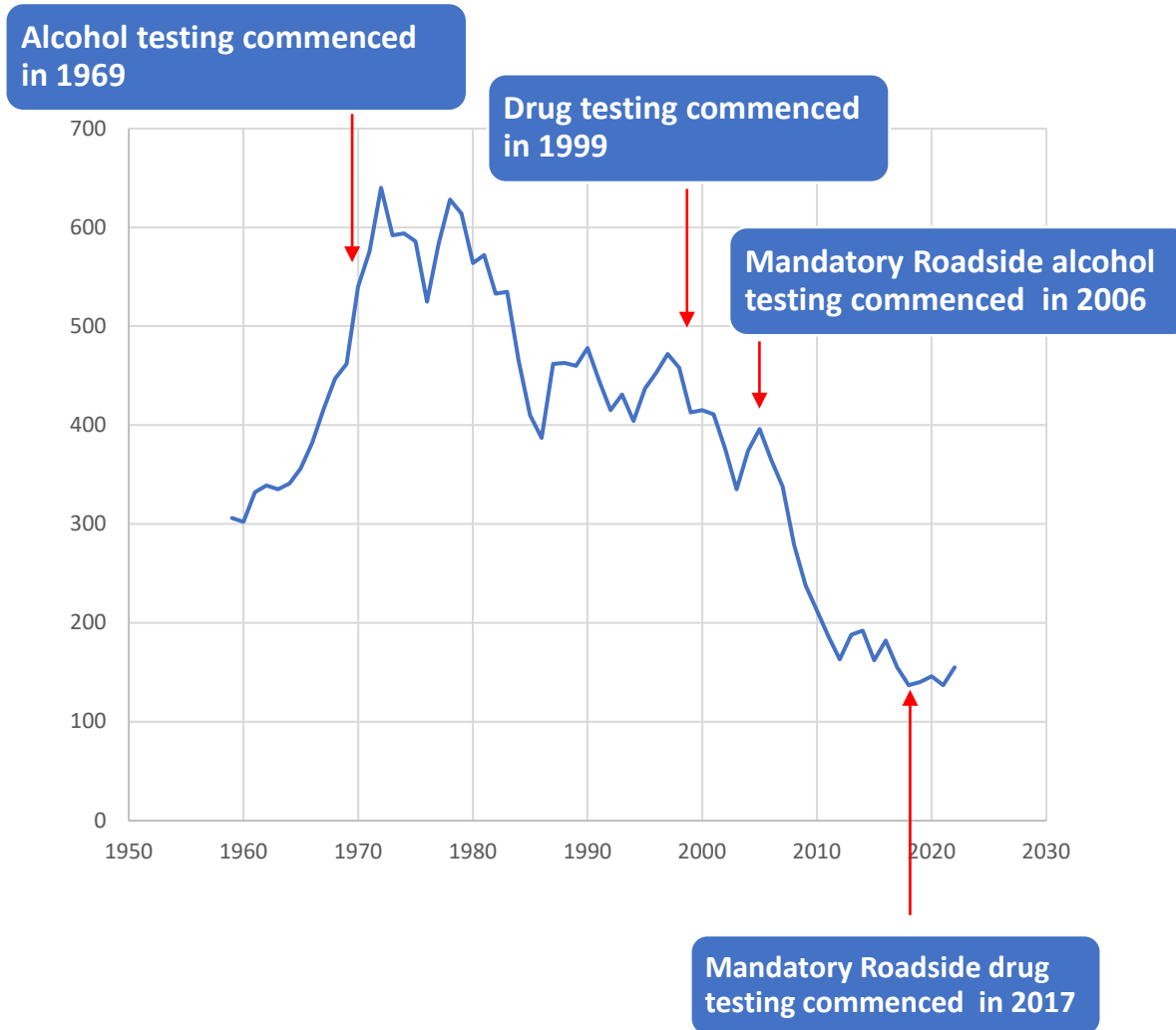
Several Perspectives in Tension

- Road safety and DUID
- Criminal supply and misuse of illicit drugs and prescribable medicines
- Safe and healthy driving
- Healthcare (including psychiatric and mental health) considerations
- Traumatic and violent deaths and self-killing
- Social and recreational uses and decriminalisation or legalization of cannabis



**1. Drugs and Road Safety
in Public Health & Death and
Injury Prevention**

Road Death Statistics 1959-2022



Road Deaths and Serious Injuries to date 2023

- ❑ Ireland's Road Safety Strategy 2021-2023 aims to reduce road fatalities and make roads safer
- ❑ Vision Zero by 2050
- ❑ 2013-2017 Road Safety Authority/NDRDI study:
 - Alcohol a contributory factor in 33% of driver fatalities
 - Drugs a contributory factor in 29% of driver fatalities
- ❑ 2021 records showed the lowest number of road fatalities since recording began in 1959
- ❑ In 2022, road fatalities increased to 155
- ❑ In 2023 to date, 23% increase on 2022 and surpassing the total for all of 2021
- ❑ 900 life-shattering injuries to date

Most Recent Changes in Legislation

- Road Traffic Act 2016:
 - Preliminary drug testing (oral fluid) including Mandatory Intoxicant Testing checkpoints
 - *per se* drug levels
 - Medical exemption for Δ^9 Tetrahydrocannabinol (but still an offence if impairment evidence)

Statutory Levels (*per se*)

Drug/Metabolite	Level in Whole Blood
Δ 9 -Tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	1ng/ml
11-nor-9-carboxy- Δ 9 -tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	5ng/ml
Cocaine	10ng/ml
Benzoylcegonine (Cocaine)	50ng/ml
6-Acetylmorphine (Heroin)	5ng/ml



Medical Cannabis Use

- Misuse of Drugs (Prescription and Control of Supply of Cannabis for Medical Use) Regulations 2019 (June)
- Limited to -
 - spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis
 - intractable nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy
 - severe, refractory (treatment-resistant) epilepsy

Medical Exemption Certificate

Road Traffic Act 2010 Medical Exemption Certificate

Deimhniú Díolúine Liachta faoin Acht um Thrácht ar Bhóithre, 2010

Medical Exemption Certificate under sections 4(1B) and 5(1B) of the Road Traffic Act 2010

Deimhniú Díolúine Liachta faoi ailt 4(1B) agus 5(1B) den Acht um Thrácht ar Bhóithre, 2010

I, the undersigned, being a person registered in the Register of Medical Practitioners established under section 43(1) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, hereby certify that the individual named below was prescribed a lawfully prescribed medicinal cannabinoid containing ⁹-Tetrahydrocannabinol on the [insert date], for a period of [insert duration of prescription].

Déanaimse, a bhfuil mo shíniú leis seo thíos agus ar duine mé atá cláraithe i gClár na Lia-Chleachtóirí a bunáidh faoi alt 43(1) d'Acht na Lia-Chleachtóirí, 2007, a dheimhniú leis seo go ndearnadh táirge bunaithe ar ⁹-Teitrihidreacannaibionól a oideasú go dleathach chun críoch íocshláinte don phearsa aonair atá ainmnithe thíos ar an [cuir isteach an dáta], ar feadh tréimhse [cuir isteach ré an oidis].

Details of Person to whom drug prescribed

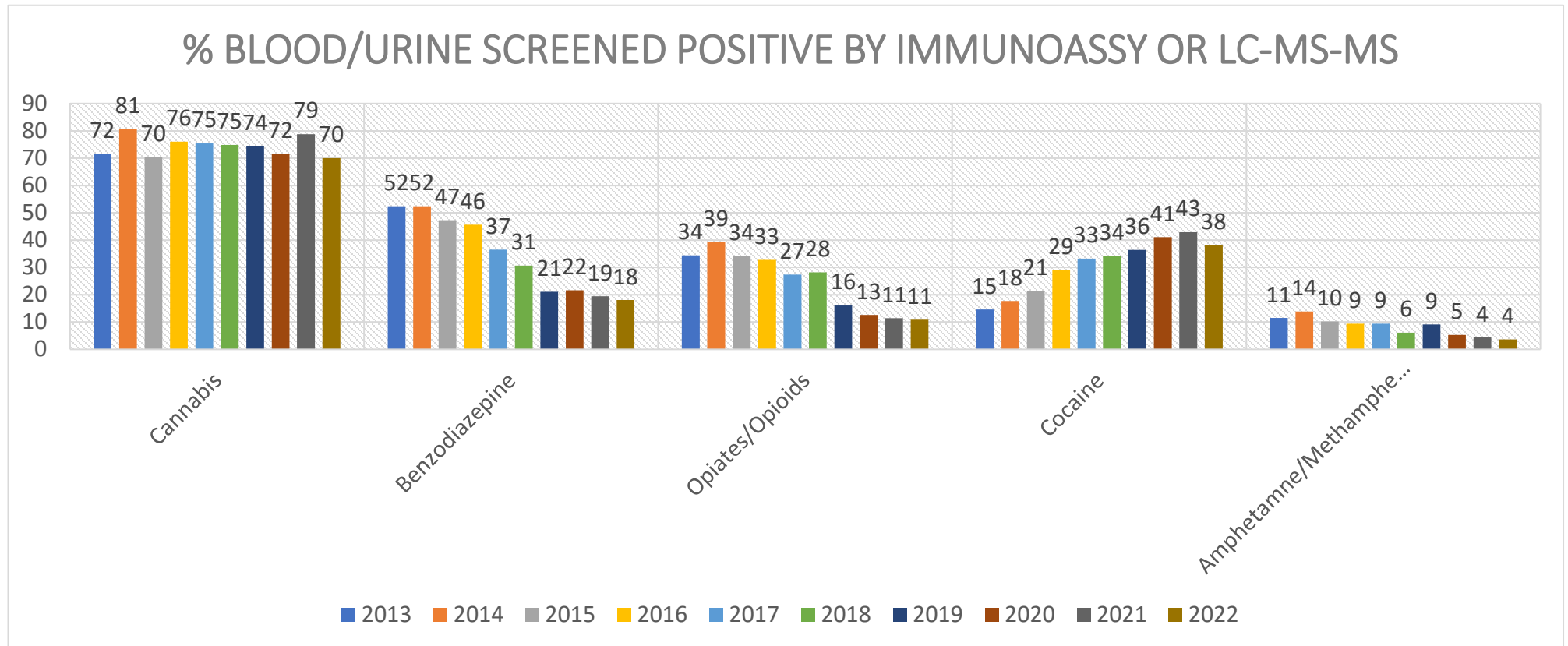
Mionsonraí an Duine dá ndearnadh an druga a oideasú

Person's name/Ainm an duine Person's date of
birth/Dáta breithe an duine Person's address/Seoladh an
duine

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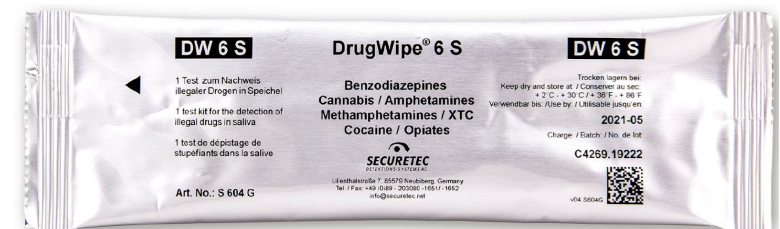
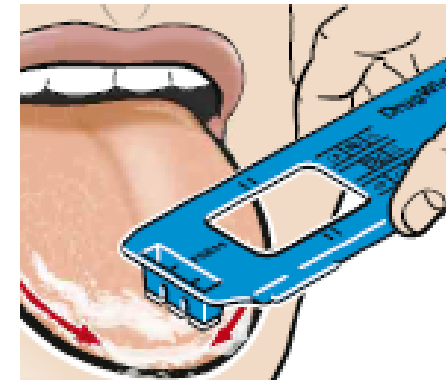
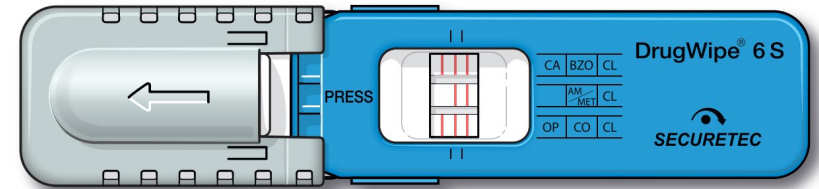
Person's driving licence number (where available)/Uimhir ceadúnais tiomána an duine (i gcás go bhfuil sí ar fáil)

Drug Driving Prevalence 2013-2022



New Device 2023

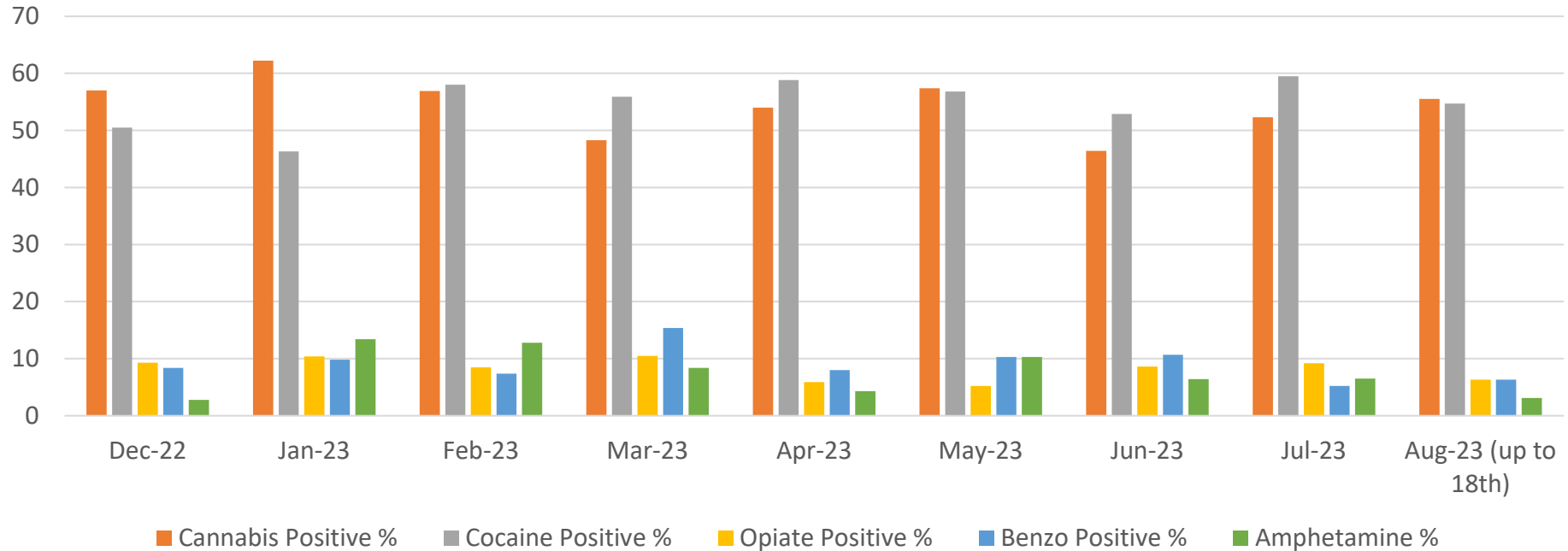
- The Securetec DrugWipe® 6S launched on the 1st of December 2022
- Not unlike the now familiar with Covid-19 antigen testing
- Can detect these classes of drugs:
 - Cannabis (THC) – 10ng/ml
 - Cocaine – 10ng/ml
 - Benzodiazepines (Diazepam) – 5ng/ml
 - Opiates (Morphine) – 10ng/ml
 - D-Amphetamine – 50ng/ml
 - D-Methamphetamine – 25ng/ml



DrugWipe Data Review

Positivity of Driver Oral Fluid Samples at roadside since the introduction of DrugWipe6S in December 2022
(from Garda Information Forms forwarded to MBRS):

Submitted Results % Positive



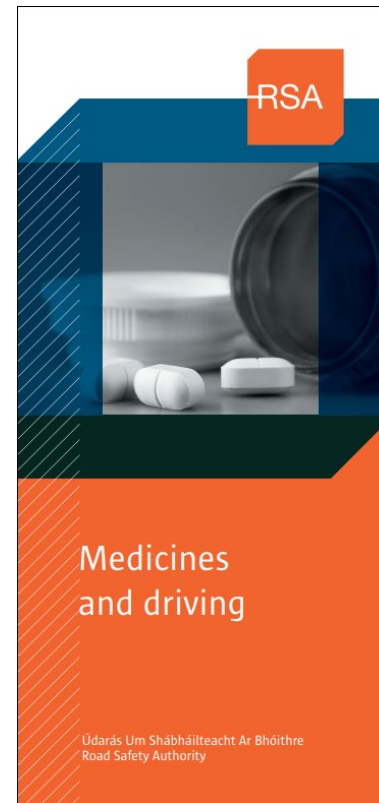
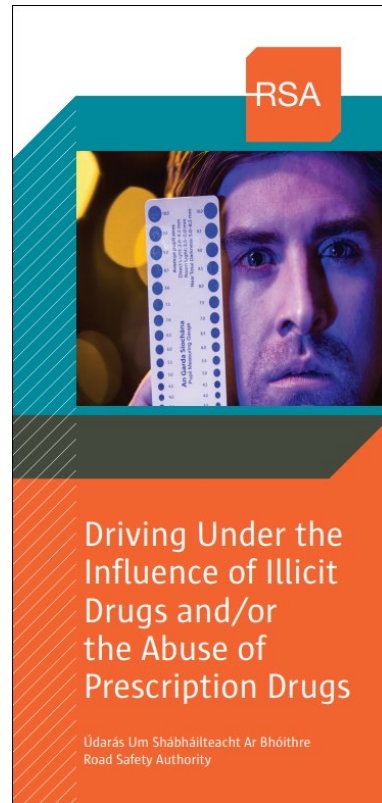
Prescribable and Over the Counter Drugs Summary

- Prescribable and OTC drugs are also a real problem and mirror taking of drugs and medications in Ireland
- Need for vigilance
- Should we be asking the more accurate question about harmful impacts of illicit and improper use of drugs rather than harmful impacts of illicit drugs?
- Examples of licit, prescribable drugs used illicitly or off-prescription: benzodiazepines, Z-drugs, pregabalin, medicinal cannabis, morphine, oxycodone, fentanyl, codeine (OTC)

Prescribable and Over the Counter Drugs Summary

- Patients should take their medications as prescribed, be safe on them, read the patient information leaflet and listen to their doctor's and pharmacist's advice
- Message to patients: Drive safely, be aware of own impairment and don't kill or maim others or self or risk losing licence to drive

Information on Drugs and Medicines



Information on Drugs and Medicines Tested by MBRS

- MBRS Annual Report 2022 on:
https://www.ucd.ie/mbrs/t4media/MBRS%20ANNUAL%20REPORT_2022.pdf
- Frequently asked questions on:
<https://www.ucd.ie/mbrs/faqs/>
- The International Council on Alcohol and Drugs and Traffic Safety factsheets on *Cannabis and Driving* on:
<https://www.icadtsinternational.com/Fact-Sheets>



**2. Drugs and Unnatural and
Traumatic Deaths
in Public Health & Death and
Injury Prevention**

Forensic Death Inquiries



- Coroners Acts 1962-2019
- Inquisitorial process
- No blame or liability or exoneration in verdict
- Recommendations may be made to prevent further fatalities

Forensic Death Inquiries



- Violent and traumatic deaths include:
 - Homicide
 - Self-killing
 - Accidents
 - Drowning
 - Road Traffic Collisions
 - Accidents at Work

Drug Related Deaths 2020

- Direct cause – fatal poisoning
- Indirect cause – contributing factor or present
- Health Research Board Reports
 - National Drug-Related Drugs Index
 - Coronial data

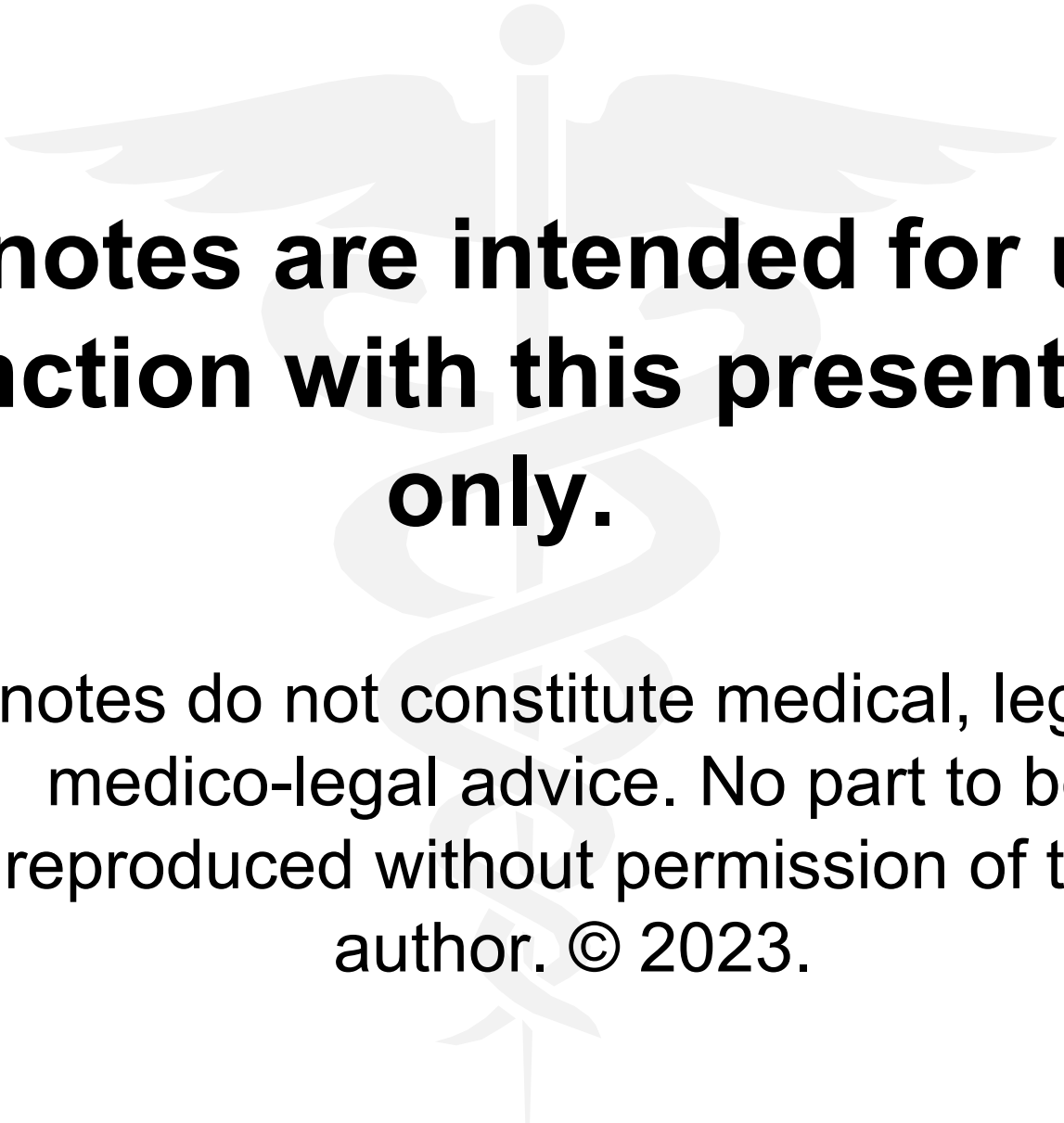
Drug Related Deaths 2020

- In 2020 409 poisoning deaths: opioids, benzodiazepines, cocaine, prescribable drugs
- Polydrugs in 80% and in combination with alcohol
- 397 non-poisoning deaths
 - hanging
 - road traffic crashes
 - falls
 - drownings
- Note: cannabis and death causation



**3. Most At Risk Group:
In Both DUID and Violent Deaths -
Public Health & Death and Injury
Prevention**

Young men under 35 years



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conjunction with this presentation
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Go raibh maith agaibh

Thank you

Discussion