

NMS Labs Director of Forensic Services reports driving impairment and DUI arrests following abuse of cold medications

September 8, 2009, WILLOW GROVE, PA – Dr. Barry K. Logan, Director of Forensic Services at NMS Labs, reports in this month’s issue of the Journal of Forensic Science, that abuse of over-the-counter medications can cause dramatic impairment in a persons driving. These medications, dextromethorphan and chlorpheniramine, found together in cough, cold and flu medications, produced driving behavior resulting in crashes and DUI arrests. The study describes impairment in 12 drivers arrested for driving under the influence of these drugs. Massive ingestion of these substances produces a dissociative dreamlike state where the user can have out-of-body experiences, delusions and hallucinations. Such ingestion has also led to deaths of teenagers in Washington, Florida and Virginia.

“The impairing effects of alcohol and drugs of abuse are well known, but is important for drivers to know that abuse of non-prescription cough suppressants can be life threatening, and creates the same type of roadway tragedies as alcohol and other impairing drugs,” explains Dr. Logan. “In most states a person can be found guilty of DUI if their driving is affected by drug use, irrespective of whether the drug involved is a prescription, abused, or available over-the-counter.”

Law enforcement agencies are now well equipped to detect drug and alcohol impairment in drivers, through field tests and evaluations, followed by laboratory testing of blood or urine. Dextromethorphan is not always tested for in suspected impaired drivers but this report suggests that it should be considered when the suspect’s impairment is not explained by their blood alcohol level.

About NMS Labs:

Since 1970, NMS Labs has been passionate about serving justice through provision of professional laboratory services. NMS Labs recently launched a test offering designed to directly support police officers trained as Drug Recognition Experts (DRE). NMS Labs is unsurpassed in its scope of tests, accuracy of results, expertise, and innovation. For more information on NMS Labs please visit www.nmslabs.com.

For more information, contact:

Pam Lipschutz, Marketing
215-366-1638
pamela.lipschutz@nmslabs.com

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