



PHA/JFD/IEA.16

19 November 1990

PHA Information Exchange Service

ALERT

**WARNING RE SODIUM OXYBATE
[GAMMA HYDROXYBUTYRIC ACID (GHB)]**

The US Food and Drug Administration has warned consumers to discontinue use of an illegally marketed drug, sodium oxybate [gamma hydroxybutyric acid (GHB)], that has been promoted as a "legal psychedelic". More than 30 reports have been received of adverse effects ranging from nausea and vomiting to severe respiratory problems, seizures and coma.

Sodium oxybate, also known as gamma hydroxybutyric acid and gamma hydroxybutyrate sodium, is marketed as a powder or granules through mail order outlets, health food stores, body building gymnasia and fitness centres. It is promoted in the USA for strength training, body building, weight loss and as a replacement for L-tryptophan, a food supplement that was removed from the market last year in the USA and several other countries after it was linked to a rare blood disorder.

Sodium oxybate is available in several European countries as a general anaesthetic for intravenous administration, and it is being evaluated in FDA-approved clinical trials for the treatment of narcolepsy.

Patients who have consumed sodium oxybate and are experiencing seizures, uncontrolled shaking, headache, unexplained drowsiness or other central nervous system disorders, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea, should consult their physician immediately.

Physicians treating patients with these conditions should report these cases to their local poison control centre.

Reference: HHS News, P90-53, 8 November 1990, Food and Drug Administration, Rockville, USA.

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