Why don’t we test more drunk drivers for other drugs?
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Introduction

Many drivers who test positive for alcohol also test positive for other drugs. These dual-intoxicated drivers are 23x more likely to be the driver in a fatal crash than people who are not intoxicated (compared to 13x more likely for alcohol-only).¹

Problem drinkers are at 18x higher risk for drug abuse.²

Those injured in crashes, especially if they have a history of drug use, are at increased risk for addiction.³,⁴

Who Says We Should Test?

The Governors Highway Safety Association and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, among other experts and policymakers, recommend more drug testing of drivers involved in accidents.

Expensive & Difficult: Other drug tests are more expensive, more difficult to administer, and much slower to yield results than Breathalyzer or blood alcohol tests.

Hard to Interpret: Unlike the BAC, test results for other drugs do not correlate closely with degree of impairment. This makes these results less convincing in court.

Not What the Laws Were Designed For: In many states, multidrug DUI is treated the same as alcohol-only DUI, so enforcement efforts focus mainly on alcohol. Some states’ implied-consent laws do not include drugs other than alcohol.

Barriers

Why Test?

To understand the size of the problem. Drug use varies by location; each jurisdiction needs to know its own level of risk.

To justify requesting funds for countermeasures. Accurate data demonstrate the need for resources for enforcement and intervention.

To keep LEOs and the public safer. Knowing the risk of accidental exposure justifies protective measures.

To intervene earlier in the addiction process. Early treatment can save lives.

Funded by a grant from the Georgia Governor’s Office of Highway Safety

¹ Li, Brady & Chen, 2013. ² McCabe et al., 2006. ³ Morris & Mir, 2015. ⁴ Wu et al., 2016.