



▶ DRUG-IMPAIRED DRIVING IS THE FOCUS OF TWG'S WINTER ISSUE BRIEF1



▶ READ ABOUT THE US/EU INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP EFFORT TO ADVANCE DRUGGED DRIVING ENFORCEMENT2



▶ INFORMATION ABOUT TWG'S CURRENT RESEARCH AND LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS INVOLVING DRUGS & DRIVING2

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Issue Brief

The Walsh Group

ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH RESEARCH

This Winter Issue focuses on our projects involving illegal drugs and driving. The Spring issue will address TWG's involvement in Workplace Drug Testing Policy and Programs.

Driving Under the Influence of Drugs

Recent research* demonstrates that drugged driving is a serious safety problem in the United States and in other parts of the world. The 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates that approximately 11 million Americans have Driven Under the Influence of an illegal Drug (DUID) or drugs during the previous year. The 2004 Maryland Adolescent Survey indicates that statewide 25% of licensed 12th grade drivers admit to driving under the influence of marijuana in the last year. Twenty-seven percent admit to driving under the influence of alcohol. Globally, research examining drugs (other than alcohol) indicates that cannabis is the most prevalent illegal drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured

drivers, and motor vehicle crash victims.

The gravity of the problem does not appear to be clearly and uniformly understood. In 2002, The Walsh Group (TWG) conducted a state-by-state analysis of DUID statutes in the United States. The analysis indicated a significant lack of uniformity and consistency in the way the states approach drugged drivers, in both legislation and enforcement initiatives. As a consequence, the problem of drugged driving is growing. We believe it is critical to evaluate both the effectiveness of the DUID laws that are currently in place, and the measures used to enforce these laws. TWG is currently involved in multiple projects that tackle these issues.

*Contact TWG for research citations



An example from Australia of the Victorian State Government's 'drugs and driving' public awareness campaign



Police officers from Europe and the US interact at the ROSITA II Meeting

TWG Hosts ROSITA II Conference

In conjunction with the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), The Walsh Group hosted the annual ROSITA II International Collaborative Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland in December 2005. More than 70 delegates representing the US, nine European Nations, and Australia participated. Attendees were comprised of researchers, police, product vendors, government officials, and representatives from funding agencies. Topics covered at the meeting included data collection methodologies, project obstacles and successes, suggestions for improvements of the technology, and future directions for drug-impaired driving enforcement and legislation policies.



Drugs & Driving on an International Scale: The ROSITA II Project

This US/EU collaboration involves sites in seven countries, and aims to evaluate roadside drug testing practices and equipment used in cases of suspected drug-impaired driving.

The Roadside Testing Assessment (ROSITA) project is a collaborative international effort to evaluate new drug detection devices for use by police to identify drivers operating motor vehicles under the influence of drugs. It is currently in its second and final phase. The project is funded by the White House Drug Policy Office (ONDCP), NIDA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the European Union.

Motorists who are pulled over for suspicion of Driving Under the Influence are asked to participate in the research by submitting a saliva sample. Tests are performed for the presence of illegal drugs. Specimens are collected confidentially and no sanctions can be brought against the participants based on their saliva sample.

The United States is utilizing four testing sites in ROSITA II: Hillsborough County, FL; Salt Lake City, UT; and the states of Washington and Wisconsin. The Walsh Group is responsible for the coordination of these American research participants.

Dr. Alain Verstraete of the University of Ghent, Belgium coordinated the six European participants: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, and Spain.

The countries varied in the reference samples they collected; some utilized blood samples, some urine, but all sites collected saliva samples for comparison purposes.

Through the course of the research, the sites tested eight devices at the roadside, in varying weather conditions. Standardized lab tests were also conducted on ten devices to evaluate product accuracy. The lab results have been reported in articles published in the *Journal of Analytical Technology*. The European sites completed their data collection in December 2005. The American sites will continue to collect samples through mid-2006.

Results will be reported in late 2006.

Drug-Impaired Driving Research Activities

TWG has been investigating the dangers of drug-impaired drivers for over a decade. We have on-going efforts in three areas: 1) deterrence and detection programs; 2) legislation and policy; and 3) laboratory and field studies

NHTSA DUID Study

This two-year project, awarded in September 2005, is entitled "Status of Driving Under the Influence of Drugs (DUID) Enforcement and Adjudication in the United States". It is the first research of its kind in America. The goal of the project is to gauge the breadth and scope of the drug-impaired driving problem nationwide.

The project will attempt to gain nationally representative data including the number of arrests, prosecutions, and convictions for DUID. Additionally, the impact of various DUID-related initiatives will be examined in select states.

Per Se Legislation Project

TWG is working with PIRE, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, on a contract which is examining the effectiveness of zero tolerance Per Se Laws for Drug-Impaired Driving. The contract is funded by NHTSA. Thirteen states have enacted Per Se legislation and are included in the research.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are being utilized in this project. Surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups are all being used to collect data. Drug Evaluation Classification (DEC) programs are also being examined.

Shock Trauma Study

TWG is conducting a series of emergency room studies to assess the prevalence of illegal drugs in trauma admissions. The focus has been on motor vehicle crash victims: drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

The most recent research has shown a startling finding that 51% of drivers involved in these crashes had illegal drugs in their system. One in four of those cases involved marijuana.

The findings have been published in articles appearing in the journals *Accident Analysis & Prevention* and *Traffic Injury Prevention*.



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NOTABLE
&
QUOTABLE!

Recent Publications
&
Presentations

Publications

TWG President Dr. J. Michael Walsh has co-authored a paper with Dr. Alain Verstraete of the University of Ghent. This paper will be published as a Transportation Research Board Circular. The article is entitled: "The legal framework of dealing with drugs in traffic". A pre-publication copy of the article will be available in February on the website of the International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety, www.icadts.org.

Presentations

On January 25th, 2006, TWG President Dr. J. Michael Walsh spoke at the 85th Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting in Washington DC. He presented information about global legislative issues involving illegal drugs and driving.



Of Note:

December 2005 was observed as National Drunk & Drugged Driving Awareness Month, in accordance with a Presidential Proclamation. 2005 marks the first year that Drug-Impaired Driving was featured in this month-long awareness-raising campaign.

To read the official decree, visit www.walshgroup.org.