

# Knowledge about new synthetic drugs in a sample of mental health professionals: the ReDNet project (Recreational Drugs European Network)

M. TORRENS (1), M. Farré (2), F. Marsá (3), y ReDNet group (4).

(1) INAD-Hospital del Mar-UAB, Parc de Salut Mar, Spain; (2) Hospital del Mar Research Institute-IMIM-UAB, Spain; (3) Hospital del Mar Research Institute-IMIM, RTA, Spain; (4) ReDNet Group (O. Corazza, Z. Davey, P. De Luca, Z. Demetrovics, A. Enea, G. di Melchiorre, L. Di Furia, L. Flesland, N. Scherbaum, H. Siemann, A. Skutle, M. Torrens, M. Pasinetti, C. Pezzolesi, H. Shapiro, E. Sferrazza, P. van der Kreeft y F.Schifano)

## Background

The influence of new technologies causes changes in the appearance and use of an heterogeneous group of synthetic drugs of abuse, also called "Legal Highs". These constitutes a class of relatively new drugs used for recreational purposes, often as legal substitutes for more common illicit drugs. These include for example Mephedrone, Spice, GBL, and Salvia divinorum that are, or when they emerged onto the drug market were, not controlled by relevant drug legislation. These "Legal Highs" constitute a challenge for professionals who are working in the clinical treatment concerning addictive disorders.

To improve the knowledge of these new drugs and decrease the risk associated with its consumption has been developed the ReDNet project in eight European countries (UK, Poland, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Belgium, Norway and Germany).

## Aim

The aim of this study is to assess the current knowledge of "Legal Highs" among health professionals in Spain

## Methods

A total of 180 Spanish mental health professionals have participated in a cross-sectional study answering a structured survey. The main issues of the survey were:

1. Current levels of knowledge about "Legal Highs".
2. Current sources of information about "Legal Highs".
3. What type and tone of information about "Legal Highs" is wanted.
4. What method of distribution of information is preferred.

## Results

1. Main sociodemographics characteristics of the sample are shown in table 1.
2. Professionals described a poor knowledge on Legal Highs (29.8%) and a Good level of IT skill (45.5%). The majority (93.3%) of respondents did not receive any information on "Legal Highs". In clinical practice, professionals attended an average of 6 (SD:19.03) patients in the last 6 months who consumed only legal highs and an average of 22(SD: 52.29) who used both legal highs and illegal substances (see table 2).
3. "Legal Highs" more known among professionals are showed in Figure 1.
4. Professionals focused their interested in understanding "Legal Highs" in: Desired psychoactive effects (59%), Psychopathological disorders associated (62.7%) and Withdrawal Syndrome (53.9%) (See Figure 2).
5. Professionals declared lists of websites (43.1%) as a relevant IT tool to understand the phenomenon of "Legal Highs" (see Figure 3).

Figure 1: Professional's knowledge of "Legal Highs" used among patients/clients (%)

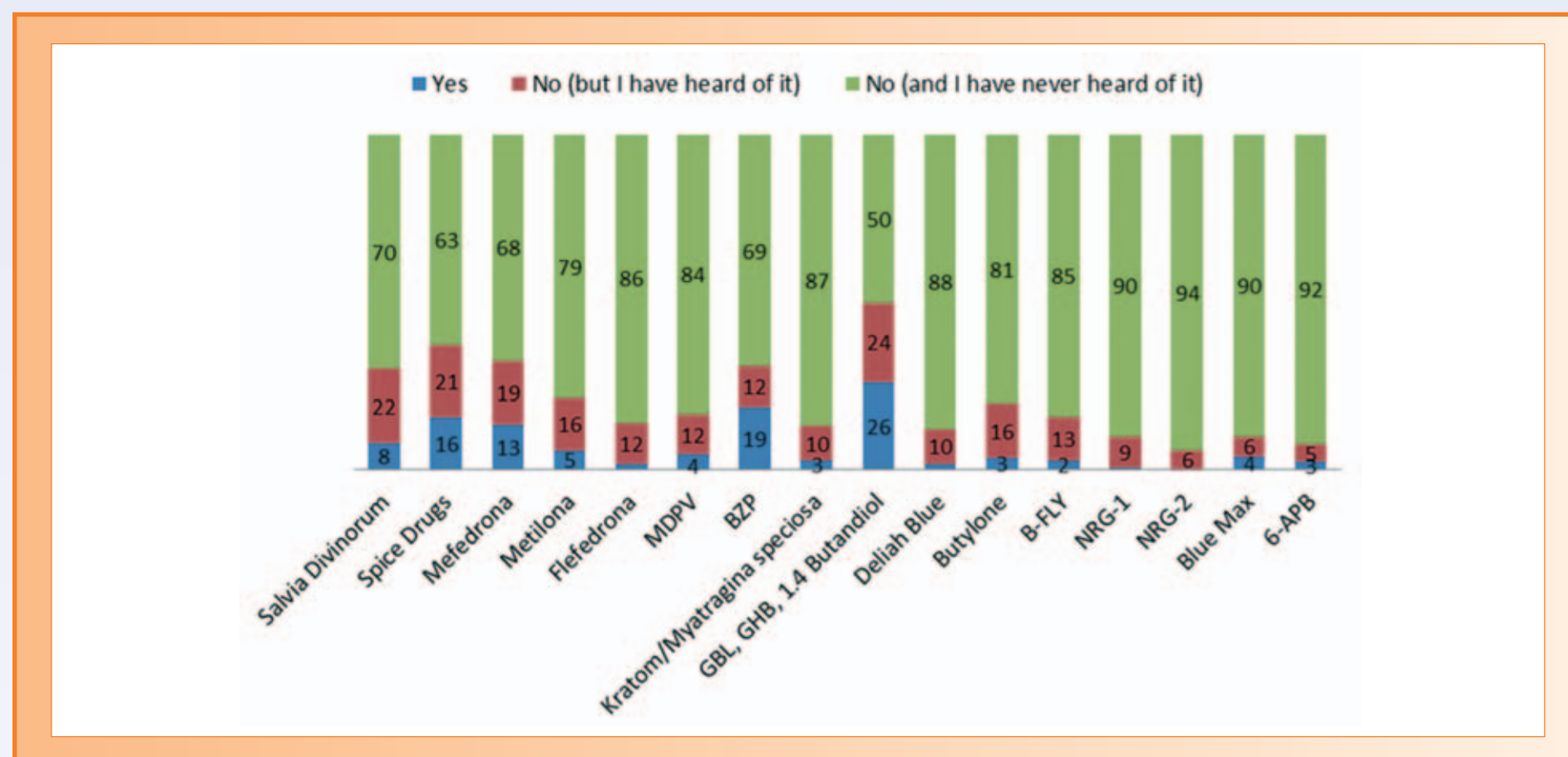


Figure 2: Relevant items to get a knowledge of "Legal Highs"

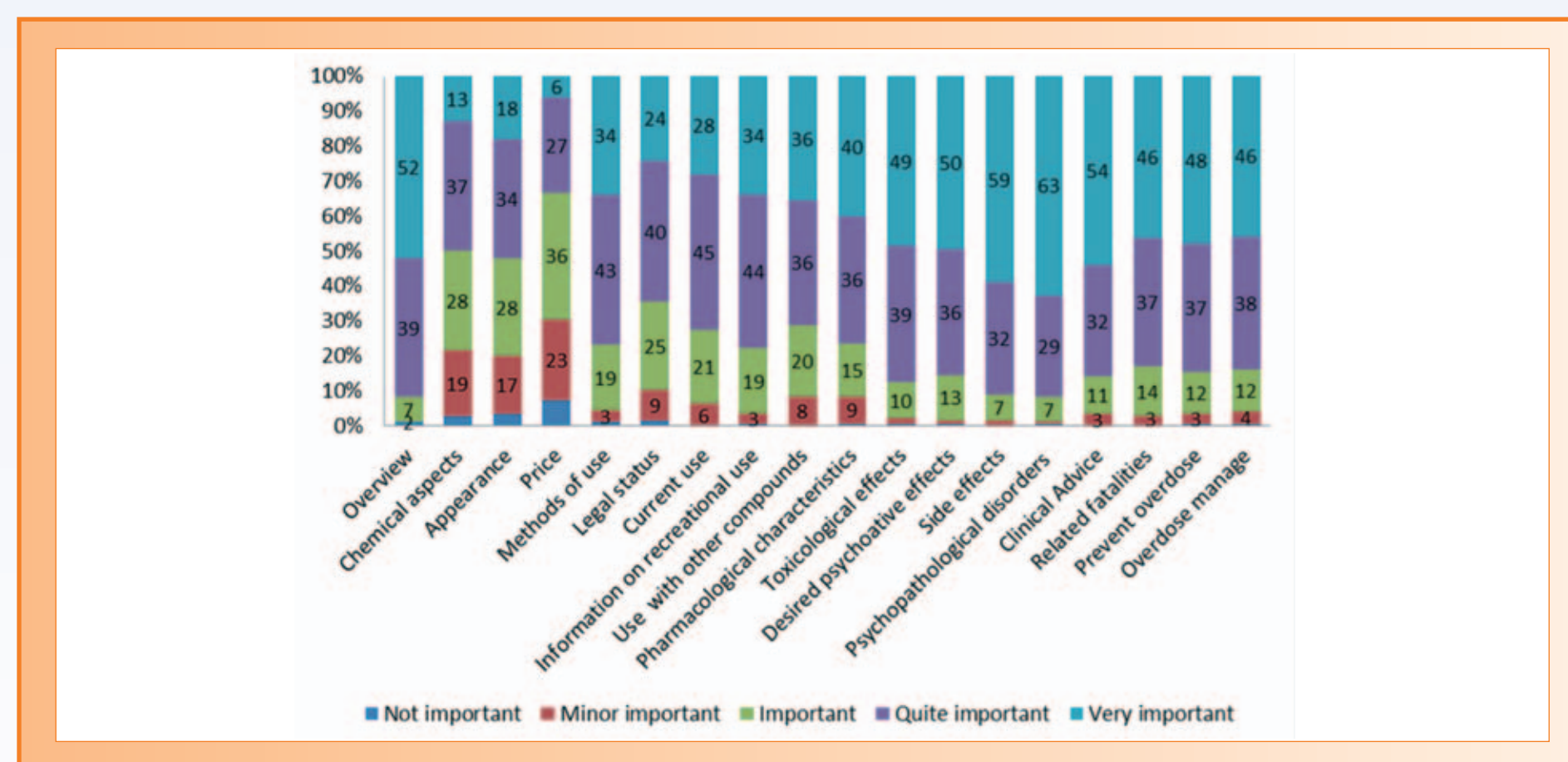


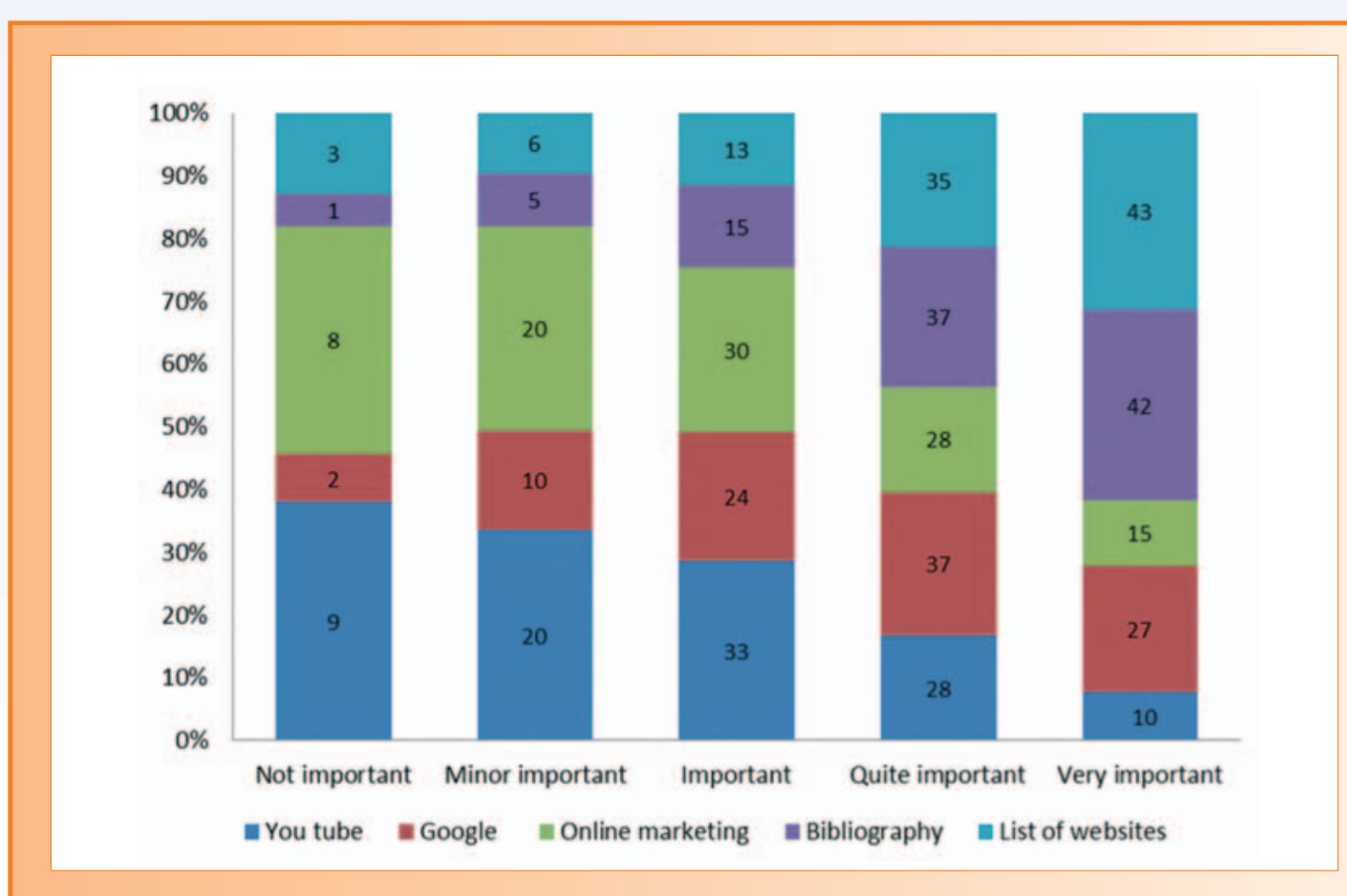
Table 1: Sociodemographics characteristics of the sample

Variables	N=180 (%)
Female (%)	68
Age: mean (SD)	37 (11.67)
Current position: Psychologist (%)	44.5
Years working: mean (SD)	8 (9,48)

Table 2: "Legal Highs" and Clinical Practice

Variables	N=180 (%)
Level of IT skills: Good	45.5
Knowledge of "Legal Highs" Poor	29.8
Currently not receiving information about "Legal Highs"	93.3
Patients/clients using "Legal Highs" in the last 6 months: mean (SD)	6 (19.03)
Patients/clients using illicit substances and "Legal Highs" in the last 6 months: mean (SD)	22 (52,29)

Figure 3: Relevant IT tools to understand the phenomenon of "Legal highs"



## Conclusion

Knowledge of Spanish professionals about new drugs is limited despite attending a relevant number of "Legal Highs" consumers. The results of this study will serve to improve the access to current information on "Legal Highs" to health professionals working in mental health based in clinical aspects through lists of websites.

RedNet Project is funded by the European Commission Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (2009 12 16). Additional funding from Red de Trastornos Adictivos -RTA (ISCIII-FIS-FEDER RD06/0001/1009).