

## LETTER TO EDITOR

# The Strawberry Quick Problem: A devil in disguise

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To,  
The editor,

I would like to report the recent Strawberry Quick drug scare which has now reached Pakistan, to add to its plethora of bewildering issues.

In 2017, a leading Pakistani private institution issued a circular to parents warning about the threat of a pop rock candy (a confection that fizzes and pops in the mouth), which is a disguise of a recreational drug cum intoxicant methamphetamine.<sup>1</sup> This has created havoc among parents, who are concerned about such products being handed out to their naive children.

The issue has been making headlines on an international level since 2007, first reported in the Western states. It was named Strawberry Quick or Quik (after 'Quik', a powder incorporated in milk drinks for adding flavor). It is dark pink in color and has a strawberry scent to it, to increase its appeal among children who perceive it as candy.<sup>2</sup>

It was warned that the drug was made available to school children and teenagers in school backyards and through fences, usually via strangers. Apart from strawberry, other flavors, including chocolate, peanut butter, cola, cherry, grape and orange have also been reported.<sup>1</sup>

Methamphetamine, a stimulant and a highly addictive drug, increases the amount of dopamine in the brain which is involved in body movement, pleasure, reward, etc. The rapid release of dopamine in the reward areas of brain creates a state of euphoria experienced by many people. It is usually taken as a powder or a pill. Methamphetamine encompasses a wide range of both short and long term effects. It causes hyperactivity, reduced appetite, faster breathing, rapid or irregular heartbeat and elevated blood pressure. Long term effects may include anxiety, confusion, paranoia, hallucinations, dental problems ('meth mouth') and weight loss. An

overdose can result in stroke, myocardial infarction, kidney failure and even death.<sup>3,4</sup>

However, law enforcing agencies have not validated the concern with sound evidences and believe that the coloring and flavoring of meth could possibly be a manufacturing process instead of a deliberate attempt to market it to children. They also conjecture the idea that children do not have the sufficient income to purchase such products.<sup>5</sup> It is imperative to note, however, that drug dealers consider teenagers as easy targets. Hence, it is vital to take the threat of drug scare into consideration and to provide effective awareness to both students and parents in order to prevent dire consequences.

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