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Title: Improving detection window of scopolamine

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Letter to the editor

Title: "Improving detection window of scopolamine"

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Dear Editor:

Crimes involving the use of drugs that modify a person's will for the purpose of theft, sexual aggression or other criminal activities are named "drug facilitated crimes" (DFCs) [1]. In 2016 there was an increase in media reports on the use of the substance scopolamine in Spain for recreational or predatory purposes. Scopolamine, an extremely potent anticholinergic drug extracted from plant species of the Solanaceae family, is quickly metabolized and cleared from body fluids. Moreover, at an appropriate dose, it blocks memory and causes passivity, disorientation, euphoria, fatigue and confusion [2]. Despite the frequent media reports concerning the use of scopolamine to carry out DFCs and the suspicion of many authors [3], few diagnoses have been confirmed by laboratory analyses [4,5]. Scopolamine was included in the general forensic guidelines for the analysis of drugs used in DFCs in 2011 and, since then, no sample in the National Institute of Toxicology and Forensic Sciences (Madrid, Spain) has been reported positive [6]. The protocol included in the guide focuses on identification of the parent drug when DFC is suspected. In these cases, the task of the forensic toxicologist is challenging since samples need to be taken as soon as possible while the drug is still detectable and, even then, highly specific instrumentation is needed.

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