

How smart are 'smart drugs'?

By ALEX GOLDFEIN

The Daily Aztec, San Diego State U.

Are they souped-up vitamins that enhance memory and performance, or are "smart drugs" simply the latest pharmaceutical fad?

According to Dr. Norman McVea of the Oxygen Research Institute in Mill Valley, Calif., and creator of Oxyhigh, a product he calls "the ultimate smart drug," the substances cause a natural high.

"People use it to increase their memory, endurance, concentration and athletic performance," he said.

"It's the only high I know of that's not brought on from a (recreational) drug."

McVea said his "smart drugs" — a concoction of minerals, amino acids and oxygen — supplement the oxygen supply you get through breathing. The product typically is mixed either with food or liquid and ingested.

The result is an increased blood-oxygen level, producing a non-chemical induced euphoria.

"Recreational drugs leave toxic residue in the brain that can last days, weeks, and will block oxygen systems in the brain," he said.

Some users of the "smart drug," McVea said, stop taking recreational substances because they prefer the oxygen-activated drugs.

At Big Heart City, a bar in the San Francisco Bay area, a popular item is a creamy orange drink laced with a natural "smart drug." Jim English, the creator of Smart Products, said the drinks make you more "focused."

Calling his product a drug is a mistake,

English said, because he claims they are really engineered to induce peak performance, whereas drugs limit a person's mental capacity.

Jerome Cleland, a senior at the U. of San Francisco, said using a "smart drug" was nothing like his experience with LSD.

"The two aren't even compatible," he said. "Where your brain gets foggy from illegal drugs this kind of drugs does the opposite. You kind of get a pickup and get much more in tune."

Both McVea and English said their products are safe.

"They're not drugs, they're oxygen," McVea

said. "Whoever's talking to me and telling me they're against oxygen better not be breathing."

But the Food and Drug Administration has yet to approve

the substances.

According to Janet McDonald, an FDA spokeswoman, the "smart drug" fad is deceptive because "smart drugs" don't really exist.

"No studies have been done because there is no such thing," McDonald said. "To mislead the public and call them smart drugs is an unlawful activity. Labeling should be truthful and not misleading."

And Christopher Clark, a neurologist at the U. of Pennsylvania, said oxygen improves physical performance but not cognitive order.

"It sounds nice," he said. "But there's no basis of reality for it. The brain is set up to get all the oxygen it needs."

"If you're going to take a physics test, I don't care how much oxygen you get. You better know physics."

"Whoever's telling me they're against oxygen better not be breathing."

— Norman McVea

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