About Half of Drivers Admitted to Maryland Shock Trauma Center Test Positive for Drugs Other than Alcohol

Alcohol and other drug use among drivers in motor vehicle crashes is common, according to a study of patients at Maryland’s primary adult trauma center. Overall, 66% of 108 drivers motor vehicle crashes admitted to the R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center over a 3 month period tested positive for either alcohol or other drugs. While 31% tested positive for alcohol (alone or in combination with other drugs), about one-half (n=55) tested positive for recent drug use. The primary drugs found were marijuana (n=29), followed by benzodiazepines (n=12), cocaine (n=11), and opiates (n=11). The authors recommend that routine drug testing be “incorporated into the standard operating procedure at all trauma centers” because such testing “could provide valuable epidemiological data to document the prevalence of drugged driving and serve as an efficient and timely way to identify substance abusers for treatment intervention” (p. 900).

Blood Alcohol and Urinalysis Drug Results for Motor Vehicle Crash Drivers Admitted to a Maryland Shock Trauma Center
(N=108 drivers)

*Positive urinalysis results indicate recent (i.e., in the past 1-3 days) drug use but do not allow for any interpretation regarding the drivers’ level of impairment while driving.

†Individual drug positives sum to more than the total number of drug positives because a driver could test positive for more than one drug.