

# Driving under the influence in Greece: A seven year survey (1998-2004)

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Alcohol is one of the main causes of traffic accidents worldwide. Its use decreases significantly the driving ability of an individual increasing in this way the possibilities of their involvement in motor-vehicle accidents. The above possibilities are increased when a psychoactive substance has been taken in combination with alcohol due to their synergistic effect. The Laboratory of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology of the University of Athens is authorized to perform the toxicological investigation of traffic accidents that happen in the southern part of Greece. The objective of the present study was to identify the prevalence of alcohol and other psychoactive substances among drivers involved in road traffic accidents in Greece during the period 1998-2004. The reported cases were classified according to the gender (male prevails) and the age of the victims. Alcohol was detected in the blood of 36-38% of drivers involved in traffic accident in the years 1998 to 2000. The detection of alcohol was significantly lower (29%) in the years 2001 to 2004. Cannabis, benzodiazepines, opiates, and cocaine were found in 1-4% of the total number of cases, during each year of the study. The above values were compared with those of a previous study concerning the period 1995-1997 and the reasons for the reduction of the number of traffic accidents during the last years are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** *Alcohol, Psychoactive drugs, Traffic accidents, Greece*

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