



K33 Ambien® - Drives Like a Dream? Case Studies of Zolpidem Impaired Drivers in Wisconsin

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain knowledge of the zolpidem impaired driver.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating an increased awareness of the growing problem of driving under the influence of drugs in the US.

Zolpidem is a non-benzodiazepine, sedative hypnotic prescribed for short term treatment of insomnia. It is available in strengths of 5 and 10 mg, with a recommended dose of 10 mg (5 mg in elderly) immediately before bedtime. Patients using the drug are directed to take zolpidem only when able to devote a full eight hours to sleep and are cautioned against operating heavy machinery or motor vehicles. There have been no reports of significant residual effect on memory or actual driving when subjects have been tested the morning after taking a single 10 mg dose.

However, zolpidem produces severe deficits in psychomotor performance and cognitive abilities when driving is attempted within 5 hours of use. Erratic driving, confusion, dazed appearance, slurred speech, incoordination, poor balance and loss of memory are often used descriptors for the zolpidem-impaired driver. Drugged driving cases in Wisconsin have been steadily increasing over the last five years. Zolpidem cases have mirrored this trend, reaching a peak of 45 cases each in 2003 and 2004. Selected zolpidem-impaired driving cases will be discussed.

Zolpidem, Impaired, Driving