

## **The Dangers of Inappropriate use of Propofol in the Tragic Demise of Michael Jackson**

Following the tragic death of Michael Jackson and the recent news that high levels of the potent anaesthetic Propofol were found in his body, the fans of Michael Jackson, the worldwide media and probably the whole world who loved his music, are wondering how this could possibly happen. Media attention has focused on the role of a physician whom is likely to have prescribed and administered it.

When Dr Malcolm VandenBurg, a leading private Medical Specialist and Pharmaceutical Physician whom has helped anaesthetists addicted to anaesthetic, was asked why Propofol may have been given, he replied:

*'I really do not understand this unless there are factors that we are not aware of, it is beyond belief that a registered, qualified doctor would use this powerful anaesthetic in a domestic situation to help a patient sleep, however much the patient insisted upon it.*

*When used appropriately, Propofol is a widely used and useful anaesthetic agent which is used to induce anaesthesia prior to operations and major procedures. It has, in appropriate hands and in appropriate conditions, a very acceptable risk benefit ratio. However, when used in an inappropriate setting, it may and has on occasions, been lethal.*

*Propofol is an agent which has many affects on the body other than its ability to safely put patients to sleep for operative procedures in hospitals or sedated in intensive care units. It may stop patients breathing, it may lower blood pressure, it may slow the heart to a point where it may stop and it may cause the heart to go into abnormal rhythms which prevents the heart from pumping blood round the body. It may also alter the salts and chemicals in the blood adversely. Due to this it needs to be given by highly trained personnel in controlled settings where heart rate, heart rhythm, blood pressure, breathing and the constituents of the blood can be carefully monitored and where there are appropriate facilities to reverse any unwanted dangerous or life threatening situations.*

*It is hard to see how in someone's personal home this could be possible.*

*Unluckily, it is also a drug which may be addictive and has been abused by a few people.*

*In my experience, it is mainly abused by a small number of healthcare professionals whom have access to it and initially use it to help them sleep due to tiredness from long working hours. As it is so active, the individuals may crave its use again to help them sleep and also for other effects which some have described as euphoria and even hallucinations. It has to be stressed that it is very dangerous to do this and one of the potentially serious consequences of all the exposure that Propofol is having, is that it may be tried by sensation seeking individuals. They should be firmly warned not to do this. There may be even a case for it becoming a controlled drug.'*

Dr Malcolm VandenBurg has registered many drugs for the pharmaceutical industry in Europe and America including another anaesthetic agent and is aware of the ways that

such drugs are used safely in hospitals and the dangers of not doing so. His warnings regarding Propofol should be well heeded and respected.

He has also delivered seminars to over 3,000 healthcare professionals through his seminars with Gael Lindenfield entitled 'Positive Under Pressure' (the book by the same name published by Avenue Books \*) and has come into contact with and assisted some anaesthetists addicted to both inhaled anaesthetic gases and intravenous drugs, such as Propofol.

Dr Vandenburg comments *'it appears to be a drug in which the addictive cycle is hard to break'*.

He has also given many medico legal opinions on prescription medicines and illegal drugs to the criminal, civil and family courts, including high profile cases of murder. In particular, one of his expertises is in the adverse effects of the benzodiazepine type drugs, many of which are alleged to have been found to be associated with this case. In particular, a drug called Midazolam, which he comments *'that text books warn have very additive effects when used with Propofol. The combination of the two are additive, if not synergistic and can severely depress respiration.'*

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