

A Study to Define the Prevalence of Methaqualone Drug Abuse among  
American Soldiers in Thailand

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**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the extent of methaqualone abuse among American servicemen in Thailand.

**BACKGROUND:** Methaqualone (Mandrax, Parest, Qualude, Sopar, Tuazole) abuse is a serious military health problem in Europe. This drug is not used by military medical facilities and its identification in urine therefore implies abuse in most instances. A study on the abuse of methaqualone by American teenagers in Bangkok has shown the problem did exist in Thailand (1). The present study was undertaken to determine the prevalence of methaqualone use among American servicemen in Thailand.

**METHOD:** We assumed that urine specimens submitted under Golden Flow were representative of all American servicemen in Thailand, as specimens are randomly sampled from all areas of the country where troops are stationed. During the 50 day period of data collection two groups of urine samples were examined. Group 1 consisted of all samples suspected of containing morphine. These were positive by the Free Radical Assay Technique (FRAT). Approximately 2000 of the samples submitted were positive by the FRAT and therefore examined for the presence of methaqualone.

Group 2 consisted of 2000 specimens which were assigned a laboratory accession number ending in 9. This was 10% of the total number of specimens submitted. These were examined for the presence of methaqualone (2).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:** Twelve of the specimens from Group 1 contained methaqualone. None of these had an accession number ending in 9. All samples from Group 2 were negative for methaqualone.

It was concluded that illicit use of methaqualone is not a major problem among American servicemen in Thailand. Use of this drug appears to be limited to those individuals who are taking some other drug, usually an opiate, with or without medical advice.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Private communication from American Employee Health Association 40/1 Soi 8 Sukhumvit, Bangkok, Thailand, 1972.
2. Jewell, J.S.: SEATO Annual Progress Report, April, 1973.