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COGNITIVE ENHANCERS – BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES

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BIOGRAPHY

John Marsden Ph.D. is a chartered clinical research psychologist and senior lecturer in addictive behaviour at the Division of Psychological Medicine, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London. He is a member of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and Regional Editor for Europe, Asia and Africa for the journal *Addiction*. John has research interests in treatment evaluation with a current focus on cocaine (in the U.K) and methamphetamine (in the Asia Pacific region).

ABSTRACT

This presentation is about the use of synthetic and herbal compounds to enhance human mental function and creativity. There is a growing interest in 'off-label' use of certain medicinal products as 'smart drugs' and a sizeable and somewhat clandestine market has opened up to meet and channel this demand. Smart drugs are divided into three categories: concentration elevators, learning and memory enhancers, and drugs to alleviate neurodegeneration. Among some users there is blurred border between non-hedonistic smart drug use and classic mood altering substance use. In telling the story of this phenomenon, I will root smart drugs in a historical account of medical and non-medical use of amphetamines and offer some remarks about my experience of making a BBC documentary about smart drugs. The talk reflects on current scientific advances in our understanding of this topic and the possible landscape of synthetic substance use for the next generation.