

# NOVEL PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

## 4<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL

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**SALA CONGRESSI (Blocco I) - Cittadella Universitaria di Monserrato**

Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are a broad variety of drugs not regulated by present legislation. The advent of NPS has contributed to the appearance and growth of a new 'drug scenario' characterized by an increased number of drug users among youth and the consumption of drugs with unknown effects or safety profiles. Preclinical and clinical findings have shown that at lower doses NPS may produce effects comparable to those of illicit psychoactive drugs, such as Cannabis, heroin, cocaine and MDMA, however, with more severe consequences.

The first wave of NPS came to Europe in the early 2000s in the form of synthetic cannabinoids followed by synthetic cathinones and phenethylamines. From 2016, a rise in the availability of novel synthetic opioids (NSO) was registered in Europe. NSO are the most dangerous NPS since they mimic morphine and heroin and are many times more potent than these opioids in producing acute toxicity. Based on their increasing prevalence, it has been estimated that their use is likely to become the primary source of NPS-associated deaths in Europe.

This International Course intends to provide undergraduate and PhD students, but also health care professionals, with a unique opportunity to gain expertise in the field of NPS and NSO by an up-to-date overview of their pharmacology, structure-activity relationships, and toxicology, and the detrimental effects associated with their intake, the overall aim being that of preventing health damage.

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