

New party pills 'just as good' as BZP

By ANNA CHALMERS - The Dominion Post | Tuesday, 01 April 2008

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BZP-laced party pills are off shelves from today but retailers say new stock, which is "just as good", will be in store by the weekend.

A ban on benzylpiperazine-based pills took effect at midnight, making any retailer selling the drugs from today liable for prosecution.

Under legislation passed last month, BZP and six similar substances are classified as C drugs, as is cannabis. Users have six months' grace before they can be prosecuted for personal possession.

Party pill retailer Dan O'Neill said his Wellington store Herbal Heaven would be closed today, but would reopen by Friday with a new name and "ample" varieties. "Our [new] stuff will be just as good."

Party pill users swamped Wellington store Quick-E Mart yesterday. It had been selling the pills for \$1 each, but by late yesterday was charging only \$1 a packet.

More than 1000 customers had been through and queues had formed outside, owner Rustin Nahulandran said. "We're going to sell out. It's absolutely crazy."

A leaflet drop in central Wellington yesterday also advertised BZP pills for \$1 each, including free delivery for 24 hours.

But Associate Health Minister Jim Anderton warned consumers planning to stockpile remaining piperazine-based party pills that having more than 100 pills or five grams would be deemed a commercial supply.

Christchurch manufacturer Wize Marketing, whose BZP products were part of the clearout, will release more than 20 new varieties, most imported.

The Drug Foundation called yesterday for a voluntary moratorium by retailers till independent tests could be carried out to determine the risks of taking the new pills.

Director Ross Bell said there was no information about what was in the new products, or their effects, and users' health could be compromised.

"Once more, the law is lagging behind what is happening in the marketplace."

Mr Anderton said it was a "regrettable flaw" in the legal system that allowed suppliers to sell pills without first having to prove their safety.

The Law Commission's review of the Misuse of Drugs Act would look at burden of proof.

<http://stuff.co.nz/4458883a19716.html>