

Outlawed drug tied to brain damage

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WASHINGTON—A new study provides direct evidence the recreational drug known as "Ecstasy," which was outlawed this summer, damages brain cells after repeated use, University of Chicago researchers say. Two researchers submitted a paper to the Drug Enforcement Administration on experiments showing rats given one dose of the drug MDMA suffered few effects, but those given eight doses suffered damage to their brain's serotonin metabolism. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter involved in regulation of sleep, mood, pain perception, sexuality, aggressiveness and other functions. The researchers said repeated injections of MDMA appeared to cause more damage than a closely related drug, MDA, which already was illegal when the federal agency outlawed "Ecstasy" in July.