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# 5 deaths linked to Ecstasy, Eve in county

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Five people died after taking the designer drugs known as "Ecstasy" and "Eve" during a nine-month period in a Dallas County county, doctors say in a new report.

Although the two synthetic drugs — chemical cousins of a stimulant called MDA — are rarely linked with death, the cases indicate such deaths do occur and may be more likely in people with underlying heart problems, doctors say.

But the cases will do little to resolve a controversy about whether one of the drugs — "Ecstasy" or MDMA — could be put to a legitimate use in psychotherapy, the doctors said in their report in today's Journal of the American Medical Association.

Designer drugs — synthesized to simulate the effects of illegal nar-

cotics without themselves being illegal — concern medical and law enforcement officials because of their growing popularity on the recreational drug scene, especially among college students.

The five newly reported deaths occurred from June 1985 to March 1986 in Dallas County.

Three occurred when Ecstasy or Eve apparently caused a fatal irregularity in the rhythm of the heartbeat, Dowling and his colleagues said.

Those victims were a healthy 18-year-old woman, a 21-year-old man and a 25-year-old man. Both men had some evidence of heart problems, the doctors said.

In another case, a 32-year-old man with asthma had a fatal asthma attack, possibly spurred by his taking MDMA, the doctors said.

In the other case, a 22-year-old man who had ingested MDMA

climbed a utility pole and was electrocuted by a high-voltage wire. The doctors ascribed the death to "bizarre and risky behavior" after taking the drug.

Although they are not commercially sold, the chemical formulas for drugs like MDMA are simple enough that they can be produced relatively easily in a laboratory, said lead researcher Dr. Graeme P. Dowling.

Psychiatrists wanting their patients to use designer drugs could simply hire a lab to make them, he said in a telephone interview Thursday.

Researchers at the University of Chicago have said even limited use of MDMA — used by some psychiatrists as a part of prescribed therapy in the early 1970s — could cause brain deterioration, and the federal government banned the drug on July 1, 1985.

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