

Ketamine, Drug Involved In Matthew Perry's Death

Why In News

- More than a month after the **"Friends" actor Matthew Perry** suddenly passed away, the Los Angeles County medical examiner's office **released an autopsy report**, saying Perry died from the **"acute effects" of ketamine**.



- The actor was found unresponsive in a hot tub at his home in Los Angeles on October 28, "floating face down in the heated end,". The autopsy report also mentioned that drowning, coronary artery disease and the effects of an opioid, buprenorphine, had contributed to his death.



- In recent years, **ketamine has been a subject** of widespread debate due to its growing use for treating depression and other **serious mental health issues**.
- While some experts and patients call it lifesaving, others say it's addictive and **causes bladder ailments**. Here is a look at what ketamine is, and whether it is safe to consume.

What Is Ketamine

- **Ketamine is an anaesthetic** that has been listed as a hallucinogen by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
- It's referred to as a "**dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen**" because it creates a feeling of detachment from pain and the environment.
- In the US, ketamine was first used as an anaesthetic for animals in the 1960s. Around a decade later, the **US Food and Drug Administration** approved it for humans.

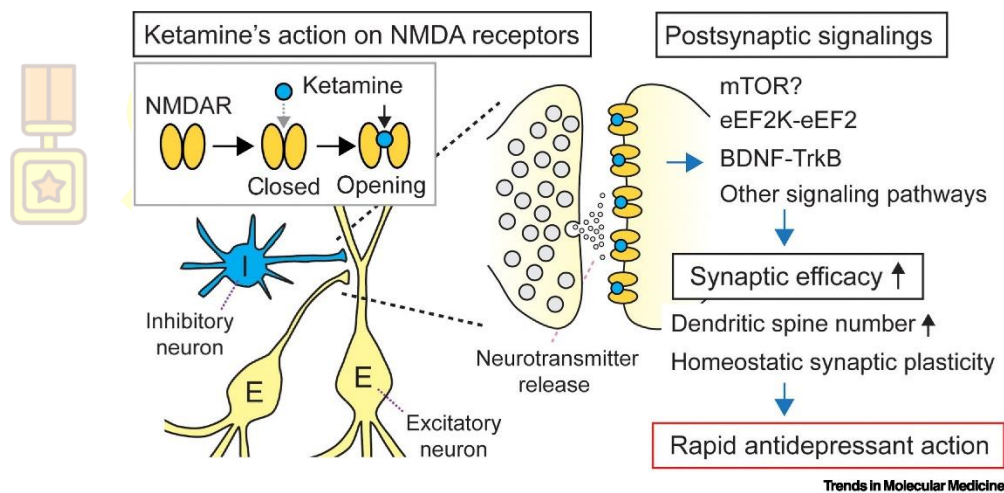


- The drug's use for **treating depression** and other **mental illnesses** is recent. Owing to its powerful effects, ketamine is consumed by those patients who haven't responded to traditional therapies.
- Ketamine is also used as a **recreational drug**, popularly known as **K or Special K among clubgoers**.
- Mental illness patients usually take ketamine through an IV, nasal spray or tablet once or twice a week for six to eight weeks (some might need it for longer).
- When it comes to **recreational purposes**, it is consumed by snorting a white crystalline powder. Ketamine can also be injected or smoked.



Effects Of Ketamine

- “During treatment sessions, they **experienced pleasant visualisations**, sometimes accompanied by a sense of existing outside themselves and melding with the universe. Afterwards, their daily problems seemed less weighty,”
- It also noted that ketamine garnered popularity as it affects brain receptors that **traditional antidepressants do not target**.



- “The psychedelic-like trip, many believe, is integral to the drug’s therapeutic effect,” the report said.
- If taken in **high doses**, the **anaesthetic quality** of ketamine becomes more pronounced. Some may find it difficult to move and may feel numb, and can experience more graphic hallucinations. “This is sometimes called the **‘k-hole’ by users**,”.
- Some doctors have emphasised that if **taken only for medicinal purposes** and in the right doses, **ketamine is safe to consume** and very effective in treating mental illnesses.
- However, many patients quoted the **drug can be addictive** and, when taken chronically in high doses, can cause severe bladder damage.



- “There are indications that abuse may also lead to **cognitive impairment**,” according to the report.
- Moreover, there hasn’t been much **research on prolonged ketamine treatment** to determine if it’s safe or not. There is also a lack of literature on addiction and abuse among medical users.

