Plants from the Solanaceae family such as *Datura* and *Brugmansia* are sources of anticholinergic alkaloid drug scopolamine. Scopolamine, or 'burundanga' can be obtained from extracts of the so-called 'Borrachero' tree found mainly in Colombia for example. Scopolamine poisoning is known to cause amnesia and is thought of by some as the scariest drug in the world.¹

Many describe the victims on whom it is used as hypnotized and are allegedly described by some sensationalized stories to act like zombies. Once under the influence, these people are prone to suggestion of what to do from anyone, although appearing lucid to others around them. It is less associated with recreational use but it has reportedly been ascribed many criminal uses such as robberies, assaults and even sensationalized stories of organ trafficking. The drug is odorless and tasteless and also may leave the person without any memories the following day.² Excess consumption may result in fatalities. The name attributed to scopolamine is 'devil’s breath' stemming from an urban legend which narrates that during episodes of intoxication, your soul temporarily drifts away.

The drug also has a colorful past of being tried as a truth serum in criminal interrogations. However it also has hallucinogenic potential.⁴

Scopolamine, or hyoscine does have legitimate medical uses. The BNF details such uses for the hydrobromide or butylbromide salts. For example, in very small quantities scopolamine transdermal patches have been used as medication for motion sickness. Other uses include symptomatic relief of muscle spasm and as premedication. It is also cytoplegic and mydriatic.⁵⁻¹⁰

Dr Camilo Uribe from San Jose University Hospital, a toxicology expert on scopolamine describes the drug as acting ‘like chemical hypnosis’.¹¹

The drug has been exploited by criminal groups in view of the potential for effortless manipulation of victims whilst under the influence and subsequent amnesia.

**REFERENCES**