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## Stealing AIDS drugs to get high

**JOHANNESBURG:** AIDS patients in South Africa are being robbed of their lifesaving drugs so that they can be mixed with marijuana and smoked, authorities and health experts say.

The concoction is called "whoonga" and it adds a bizarre twist to the war on AIDS in the world's worst-affected country just as it embarks on a massive distribution of medications.

Whoonga's spread is limited to eastern KwaZulu-Natal, the country's most AIDS-stricken province, but AIDS specialists worry that it could reach other parts of the country.

There's no evidence that any ingredient of

the AIDS drug cocktail is addictive or does anything to increase the marijuana high.

Whoonga smokers might be fooling themselves into believing the AIDS drugs were giving them a high, when it was really some other ingredient, said Dr Njabulo Mabaso, an AIDS expert.

AIDS is a source of damaging myths in South Africa, such as that the disease can be prevented by sleeping with a virgin or showering after sex with an HIV-positive partner.

Some drug dealers are suspected of stretching the whoonga mixture with soap powder and even rat poison to increase their profits. — AP