

### **“Modaka” use among school children**

“Modaka” use is a new trend of drug abuse in Sri Lanka. Various government organizations, NGOs and the general public expressed their concern to the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board. They have observed that modaka was freely available and use of modaka by students had increased regarding this issue. As a response the National dangerous Drugs Control Board appointed a committee to find out the actual situation of modaka abuse Board on a suggestion made by the committee. An exploratory study on prevalence and availability of modaka use was conducted in January and February 2002. A non-probable snowball sample of 60 student modaka users and 88 vendors were interviewed using a pre-tested questionnaire. In addition, observations of the students and the vendors were recorded. The objective of the study was to ascertain availability and prevalence of modaka use among school children. Due to the limited resource availability the study has to be restricted to Colombo district only.

All modaka users identified in all (19) locations were male. The highest percentage (94%) of modaka users was found within the age group of 16 - 20. The majority were Sinhala (82%) and Buddhist (80%). 93% of them were studying at Advanced Level. The modaka has been introduced to most of them (68%) by friends. Of them 12% of were regular modaka users, while 33% used 2 - 3 times a week. 35% used it occasionally. The majority (65%) had been in the modaka habit for 1 - 2 years. Among them 45% consumed 1-3 packets a day (approximately 5-8 grams). Forty seven per cent used modaka for intoxication.

Although modaka is an indigenous medicine, presently it is abused by the youth. The number of illegal modaka producers has increased. The present study revealed that Modaka use is spread in the country and has the potential of becoming a big problem like heroin use.