

Eleanor Lehmann believes she was drugged.

She can't prove it because she couldn't get a test in Bloomington.

By Emma Uber
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Editor's note: This story contains strong language and mentions of sexual violence.

When Lucy Brush returned home from dinner with her boyfriend and his mom around midnight on Sept. 11, she saw something or someone collapsed in her yard.

Through the darkness, she could not tell who or what it was.

As she drew closer, she recognized a face she had known since she was 4 years old: her best friend and roommate Eleanor Lehmann. Terror crept up her throat — the only way she could tell Lehmann was alive was the way she twitched and shivered.

Lehmann laid in a pool of her own vomit, incoherent and unable to control her muscles, Brush said.

"I was terrified," Brush said. "I don't know how anyone else would feel when they see their best friend in their state."

Brush and her boyfriend carried Lehmann into the house. Once inside, her skin morphed between pale and frigid and splotchy and hot. Brush said Lehmann remained incoherent besides muttering the phrase "something's wrong" over and over. Lehmann continued to vomit but was unable to lift her head into the trash can on her own.

Lehmann said she can't remember much, but she vividly recalled collapsing in the front lawn and calling her other roommate for help just before she lost all motor control, unable to stand up or even lift her head.

Lehmann believes she was drugged that night, but she can't prove it.

After two trips to IU Health Bloomington Hospital and a call to the Bloomington Police Department, Lehmann still could not determine who she believes drugged her and with what.

Her urine test — which she said she was told could not test for date rape drugs — came back inconclusive. Her blood alcohol content could not explain her incoherence. Her experiences with the people who were supposed to protect her, medical professionals and the police, left her feeling helpless and discouraged.

Director of the Office for Sexual Violence Prevention and Victim Advocacy Sally Thomas said date rape drugging incidents increased dramatically this semester compared to the past few years. There has not been a corresponding increase in resources to prevent and treat date rape drugs.

Lehmann, a 21-year-old IU senior, calls her experiences a wake-up call — not only to the dangers of date-rape drugs but to the sheer lack of resources available for people who are drugged.

"I just want to know what the fuck was in my body."

—Eleanor Lehmann

Lehmann attended a friend's house party Sept. 11. Since she was at a friend's house, surrounded by people she knew well, Lehmann said she did not watch her drink as closely as she would at a bar.

Not long after arriving at the party

PHOTO VIA ADOBE STOCK

where she believes she was drugged, she called an Uber with a friend, planning to meet Brush and her boyfriend at a bar. While in the Uber, Lehmann began to feel dizzy, disoriented and nauseous. She asked to be dropped off at home alone, but her condition worsened so rapidly she collapsed before she could get to the front door.

Brush said she headed home after Lehmann didn't show up at the bar and stopped responding to text messages. Lehmann's other roommate, Sophie Amick, and her boyfriend rushed home after receiving an alarming phone call from Lehmann — a call she managed to make before losing her motor control entirely.

Lehmann's roommates did not immediately take her to the hospital, but they knew something was wrong. Brush said she's seen Lehmann drunk many times before but had never seen her like this. Amick said she had never seen anyone in Lehmann's state, let alone her roommate and close friend.

After bringing Lehmann into the house, the two roommates and their boyfriends realized she had been drugged. Lehmann believes she was drugged with GHB based on her symptoms. If she's correct, she had less than a day before the drug would leave her system, taking any evidence of its presence with it. So, by the time they realized she had likely been drugged, she had already begun to lose her race against time.

Lehmann's roommates began seeking medical attention about 45 minutes after finding her collapsed in the front yard. They called the non-emergency BPD number, which instructed them to bring her to the emergency room.

An hour after finding Lehmann and approximately an hour and a half after Lehmann estimates she ingested the drug, the group arrived at the IU Health Bloomington Hospital expecting the staff to understand their urgency.

Instead, they said they waited for an hour while the staff refused to treat Lehmann until she consented — something difficult for a drugged, incoherent person to do.

IU Health Bloomington policy requires patients to consent to medical treatment, but Director of Emergency and Trauma Services Katy Howe said in emergency situations where urgent treatment is necessary and the patient can't consent, consent is implied.

Eventually, Lehmann was brought back to a hospital room, accompanied by Brush and her boyfriend. Brush said they waited another hour in the hospital room before a medical professional arrived.

Throughout the night, Brush and her boyfriend slept on the floor at the foot of Lehmann's hospital bed. Brush woke up and explained Lehmann's condition to each doctor or nurse who entered the room. Brush said Lehmann was treated

by a new medical professional nearly every time.

Brush said she felt frustrated by the lack of communication between the IU Health staff because it felt like they were wasting precious time explaining the same thing over and over while waiting for treatment.

Doctors and nurses drew Lehmann's blood and asked her to provide a urine sample. Lehmann said she does not remember much of these interactions except gaining consciousness sitting on the toilet with a nurse knocking on the door to make sure she was alright. Still dazed and desperate to lay back down, Lehmann scooped her urine out of the toilet and into the cup then handed it to the nurse.

Lehmann's blood test, approximately three hours after she believes she was drugged, revealed a blood alcohol content of 0.1. The average person's BAC drops by 0.01 per hour. According to the University of Notre Dame's Student Well-Being Center, a BAC of 0.1 is legally intoxicated and could result in slurred speech, impaired balance, slowed reaction time and loss of good judgment.

However, a 0.2 BAC — described as inability to walk, total mental confusion, nausea, vomiting and possible memory loss — captures Lehmann's condition more accurately.

That begs the question: why did Lehmann exhibit symptoms of a person with double her BAC?

Lehmann's urine test was inconclusive. When she asked for another, she said she was denied. She asked specifically about testing for date rape drugs, only to be told IU Health Bloomington does not test for date rape drugs.

"We don't do that here," both Lehmann and Brush recall a nurse saying in response to asking for a date rape drug test.

Amick, their other roommate, said it seemed as if the hospital did not have a protocol in place to deal with date rape drugs, something that concerned her given that Bloomington is a college town with many parties.

"It was genuinely disgusting," Amick said about IU Health Bloomington's treatment of Lehmann. "They treated her like she was just drunk, which it was clear she wasn't."

Lehmann said many of the medical professionals she interacted with dismissed her concerns, and she felt some blamed her for getting drugged. For example, while Lehmann was being discharged both Lehmann and Brush recall a nurse commenting things such as "Oh, so you partied a little too hard last night?" and making light of the situation.

When told about Lehmann's experience of being treated like she got too drunk and was to blame for her experience, Howe said IU Health Bloomington does not condone victim blaming and encouraged patients who think their voices are not being heard or respected to ask for a charge nurse and alert them about the situation.

"I would never condone anybody being treated like that," Howe said. "I don't know the specifics around this case, but I would ask that patients speak up in the moment," I know that's hard because people think that they're being a pest or that they're bothering us. That is not the case. We would want this brought to our awareness so that we can make it right in

SEE LEHMANN, PAGE 2

Chimes of Christmas

THIS SATURDAY ORDER NOW!

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MALLOREY DAUNHAUER | IDS
Eleanor Lehmann poses Nov. 15, 2021, on her couch in Bloomington. Lehmann was rushed to the emergency room when her roommates found her experiencing possible symptoms of ingesting the date rape drug GHB. When she asked for a date rape drug test at IU Health Bloomington, Lehmann was told that the hospital did not conduct these kinds of tests.

Race against the clock

11:45 P.M. SEPT. 11

Eleanor believes she was drugged at approximately this time. If she was drugged with GHB, as she believes, it can take as little as 10 minutes to start feeling the effects.

MIDNIGHT

Lucy Brush and her boyfriend find Eleanor in the front yard.

12:45 A.M. SEPT. 12

Eleanor's roommates and their boyfriends take her to IU Health Bloomington Hospital.

2:00 - 2:30 A.M.

Eleanor is taken back to a hospital room after waiting for an hour. She isn't seen by a medical professional until 2:30 a.m., another half hour later.

2:30 - 7:30 A.M.

Medical professionals draw blood, take a urine sample and give Eleanor an IV. Lucy and her boyfriend sleep on the floor. It becomes clear to them that the staff are just treating her like she drank too much.

6:00 A.M.

GHB could no longer be detected in Eleanor's saliva.

7:30 A.M.

Eleanor is discharged from the hospital.

8:00 A.M.

GHB could no longer be detected in Eleanor's blood.

12:00 P.M.

GHB could no longer be detected in Eleanor's urine.

8:00 P.M.

Eleanor returns to the hospital to ask about getting another test. She is told no and that her last test only showed marijuana.

WORDS BY EMMA UBER | IDS
GRAPHIC BY ABBY CARMICHAEL | IDS

» LEHMANN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the moment."

Lehmann stayed at the hospital until about 7:30 a.m. Sunday, making her hospital stay a total of about six and a half hours. Her discharge notes listed "alcoholic intoxication" as the reason for her hospital visit. Her paperwork did not mention her concerns that she was drugged anywhere.

After returning home and recovering for most of the day, she began to worry about the fact she did not know what drug she consumed nor did she have any proof she was drugged.

"I felt very dehumanized and very ignored," Lehmann said. "They didn't make me feel safe, they didn't make me feel welcome there. I left feeling super off-put. The whole

thing felt wrong."

Lehmann returned to the hospital around 8 p.m. that day to request another drug test. She was once again told IU Health Bloomington Hospital does not test for date rape drugs and it would have to have sent her labwork to the state lab. Lehmann said the nurse told her there is no way to prove she was drugged but all signs point to yes.

"I was by myself, I was super stressed out, and I started crying," Lehmann said. "I just want to know what the fuck was in my body."

* * *

Date rape drugs can be any substance that inhibits someone's ability to consent. Howe said alcohol is the most common substance used to spike drinks and impair consent.

Common drugs used to

spike drinks include Rohypnol; gamma-hydroxybutyric acid, or GHB; gamma-butyrolactone, or GBL; and ketamine, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Common prescription drugs for anxiety and depression are also frequently used as date rape drugs.

Lehmann believes she ingested GHB because she displayed many of the trademark GHB symptoms. If this is the case, Lehmann began fighting a battle against the clock as soon as she consumed the drug.

GHB can be detected in saliva tests up to six hours after ingestion, blood tests up to eight hours after ingestion and urine tests up to 12 hours after ingestion, according to American Addiction Centers.

Katy Howe, IU Health Bloomington Director of Emergency and Trauma Services, said the urine tests offered at the hospital can detect the presence of certain drug groups that are commonly used as date rape drugs, such as benzodiazepines and cannabinoids.

However, in order to determine the quantities of each type of drug or identify the specific drug, Howe said the urine sample would need to be sent to a state testing lab. She said sending results to the state lab often happens when evidence is needed for a criminal investigation, therefore, the decision to incorporate the state lab is not in the hospital's jurisdiction.

Because of this policy and how quickly drugs leave the body, many people will never get tested to prove they were drugged — meaning if they need the evidence for a criminal investigation or any other reason, it will be too late.

* * *

Even while describing her experience, Lehmann repeatedly called herself lucky.

Lehmann considers herself lucky because she left the party before the drug took effect, because she collapsed in her own front yard, because she was found quickly, because it was her friends who found her instead of a stranger. Lehmann knows there are many women at IU who won't be so lucky.

"It's effed to say that I was severely drugged to the point of having to go to the ER and I was a lucky one," Lehmann said.

As of Nov. 8, there have been 34 reported sexual assaults at IU-Bloomington

since the start of the semester in August, according to IU News Net.

If Lehmann had been assaulted that night, she would have no proof she was unable to consent due to a date rape drug. Despite calling the police and visiting the hospital twice, there is no official record documenting Lehmann's concern that she was drugged. Medical records show Lehmann's BAC at 0.1 and do not mention any date rape drugs, meaning Lehmann would not be able to prove her level of incoherence in court.

"My life was in danger and it wasn't being taken seriously."

—Eleanor Lehmann

"Thank God I wasn't raped, but if I had been, the evidence of me being drugged would have been crucial in my case against my rapist," Lehmann said. "Hopefully, a girl never gets raped here, in general, but especially after being roofied because they're going to be treated like shit."

The increase in reported sexual violence at IU resulted in the Panhellenic Association and Indiana Fraternity Council banning all social pairs or quads between IFC fraternities and PHA sororities for the remainder of the fall 2021 semester.

Howe said she wanted sexual assault survivors to feel safe seeking medical attention, even if they were not drugged and willingly consumed alcohol or drugs that impaired their ability to consent.

"Let me be very clear: It doesn't matter if that person chose to consume that alcohol, it does not give anybody the right to assault them," Howe said. "We don't judge anyone for consuming alcohol or drugs and then getting in the situation where they're assaulted. That's still a person, they still said no and when you're under the influence you can't consent."

* * *

Lehmann did not realize the lack of resources in Bloomington to prevent and test for date rape drugs until

she desperately needed them.

"It sounds so stereotypical but you just don't think it's going to happen to you," Lehmann said. "Having experienced this, I know that if I get drugged again I'm screwed. If I were to get a lethal dose, don't even take me to the hospital because clearly they're not taking this seriously."

IU mentions date rape drugs once across its multiple sexual violence prevention webpages: in a general safety tip titled "Buddy Up." Located near the bottom of the "Preventing Sexual Misconduct" webpage and in a smaller font than the rest of the information, it reads:

"Watch your beverage at all times. Date rape drugs are tasteless, colorless and odorless so you won't know if you've ingested one."

There is no information about how to test for or treat date rape drugs nor any mention of consequences for drugging others.

Amick said the IU Student Health Center is useless when it comes to date rape drugs because the health center is closed after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays and entirely on the weekends, when date rape drug incidents usually occur.

"This made me as a woman feel completely helpless at a school that I expected to keep me safe," Amick said.

Director of the Office for Sexual Violence Prevention and Victim Advocacy Sally Thomas said despite the physical office closing, there is a 24-hour sexual assault crisis hotline. At any time of day a student can call the hotline and immediately speak to a confidential victim advocate, Thomas said.

"We just have to do more education and understanding of what to look out for."

—Sally Thomas,
Director of the Office for
Sexual Violence Prevention and
Victim Advocacy

Brush said the scariest and most angering part of Lehmann's experience was feeling helpless — not knowing what to do, where to go or who could help her friend.

"I simply feel like the fact

that we live in a college town and we live in a place where on every bathroom door there's a list of numbers to call if some sort of sexual assault has happened, IU presents themselves as someone who is going to keep their students safe," Brush said. "When the time actually comes, we were left with nothing to do and no one to turn to."

Lehmann said the IU Student Health Center should offer free date rape drug testing and other resources such as drink covers.

"I would be fine if my tuition was going towards buying date rape drug test kits," Lehmann said. "Even if I'm never drugged again, hopefully that could prevent somebody else getting drugged."

Thomas said the Office for Sexual Violence Prevention and Victim Advocacy does not offer drug testing and advises students to go directly to the hospital.

However, Thomas said her office plans to launch a new date rape drug prevention campaign next semester in response to the dramatic increase in date rape drug incidents this semester, which will include training on what things to look out for and what to do if you have been drugged. Date rape drugs are not normally a common occurrence at IU, but this semester there has been a significant increase in reported druggings, Thomas said.

"This has not been an issue that we've seen more every once in a while over the past few years," Thomas said. "Now seeing this high of a number, it is clear we just have to do more education and understanding of what to look out for."

The Monroe County Sexual Assault Response Team aims to provide an efficient, comprehensive response to sexual assault by bringing the Monroe County prosecutor's office, IU Health Bloomington, the IU Student Health Center and other community resources into one team.

According to the website, SART offers a Victim's Advocate to explain legal rights, a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner specially trained to perform a forensic medical examination to treat and document evidence of injuries and a law enforcement officer to investigate the assault.

"We have a sexual assault response team here in Monroe County and it's so multifaceted," Howe said. "But

SEE LEHMANN, PAGE 4

Eleanor Lehmann believes she was drugged with GHB.

What is GHB?

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, GHB is a chemical compound originally used as a surgery anesthetic. It became a party drug in the 1980s.

Since then, it has become one of the most common date rape drugs. Because both GHB and alcohol are depressants, the combination can be fatal.

GHB leaves the body quickly and can only be detected in most tests for less than a day.

Eleanor exhibited many classic GHB symptoms, including:

- Vomiting
- Memory loss
- Sweating
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination and motor skills
- Nausea



SOURCE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION PHOTO VIA ADOBE STOCK
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