

# Don't ban ketamine – it's an essential anaesthetic,

## doctors tell UN despite abuse problem

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

THE powerful tranquilliser ketamine should be kept off a worldwide illegal drugs list despite it being abused by clubbers, doctors have warned.

They say it should always be treated as a medicine and not placed under UN

restrictions. The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) has called for global support for its initiative to protect ketamine's status as an essential medicine for anaesthesia and pain relief.

China and other countries want the drug included on the UN schedule for

controlled drugs. Dr Jannicke Mellin-Olsen, newly elected WFSA president, spoke out at the group's world congress in Hong Kong. She said: "Ketamine is an essential anaesthetic and painkiller, especially in countries with limited options and poor storage facilities in their hospitals."

Ketamine is used as the sole available safe anaesthetic in many parts of the world. Experts say it is also easily transported in situations such as disasters, in which vital lifesaving surgery can take place at the scene of the disaster.

But countries such as China and Thailand that have experienced prob-

lems with ketamine abuse want access to be restricted in the same way that morphine is a scheduled or controlled substance.

The UN's Commission on Narcotic Drugs has so far not submitted to their demands. The World Health Organisation, which has reviewed ketamine

several times since 2004, when the International Narcotics Control Board first noted that illicit use was a problem, has repeatedly warned that placing ketamine under international control would have a devastating affect on access to safe surgery for billions of people.