

SPECIAL NAIL POLISH MAY HELP DETECT DATE- RAPE DRUGS

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The students, four young men majoring in Materials Science & Engineering at North Carolina State University, have named the nail polish line "Undercover Colors" and are promoting the project as "The First Fashion Company Empowering Women to Prevent Sexual Assault."

"While date rape drugs are often used to facilitate sexual assault, very little science exists for their detection," the students wrote on the Facebook page devoted to the product. "Our goal is to invent technologies that empower women to protect themselves from this heinous and quietly pervasive crime."

Ankesh Madan, one of the students behind the project, told Higher Education Works that his team is planning to take the nail polish line to market. But right now they are still focused on developing and testing the product, he said.

The project won the Lulu eGames competition at North Carolina State University this spring, which is sponsored by NC State's Entrepreneurship Initiative to encourage students to come up with working solutions to real-world problems.

The students are now raising money to continue developing the product.

"Through this nail polish and similar technologies, we hope to make potential perpetrators afraid to spike a woman's drink because there's now a risk that they can get caught," the students wrote on their Facebook page. "In effect, we want to shift the fear from the victims to the perpetrators."

However, not everyone is enthusiastic about the idea of date-rape-drug-detecting nail polish. Some activists say it sends the wrong message.

"The problem isn't that women don't know when there are roofies in their drink; the problem is people putting roofies in their drink in the first place," Rebecca Nagle, one of the co-directors of an activist group called FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture, told ThinkProgress.org.

"One of the reasons we get so excited about these really simple fixes is because it makes us feel like the problem itself is really simple. That's a comforting idea," Alexandra Brodsky, a founder and co-director of Know Your IX, a group whose goal is to address the issue of campus sexual violence, told ThinkProgress. "But I really wish that people were funneling all of this ingenuity and funding and interest into new ways to stop people from perpetrating violence, as opposed to trying to personally avoid it so that the predator in the bar rapes someone else."

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