

Broward Briefings

Substance Abuse

Information for Action



March 2016

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Poisonous Opiate Analogs are Here

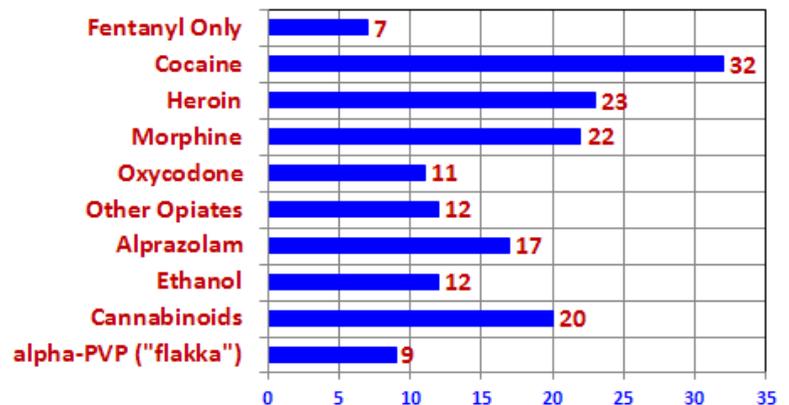
A critical factor in the increasing numbers of heroin deaths nationally as well as in Broward County and other parts of Florida are highly potent and poisonous chemical opiates produced in clandestine labs from foreign countries such as Mexico and China. They are being sold as or mixed with heroin or as counterfeit medications like "Xanax" or "Oxycodone." The first of these substances to appear have been **non-pharmaceutical fentanyl** or **analogs of fentanyl**, a Schedule II narcotic widely used as an analgesic and anesthetic. It is the most potent opioid available for use in medical treatment. Fentanyl is potentially lethal, even at very low levels. Doses as small as 0.25 mg can be fatal. Its euphoric effects are indistinguishable from morphine or heroin. Fentanyl and its various analogues from clandestine labs are up to 100 times more powerful than morphine and 30-50 times more powerful than heroin.

There were 79 fentanyl deaths in Broward County during 2015, up from 53 in 2014. Fentanyl was the only drug detected in 7 of the 2015 cases while other drugs were identified in the remaining 72 cases including 23 with heroin and 45 with one or more other opioids present. The Broward County Medical Examiner also reports a significant increase in fentanyl analogs detected in decedents in recent months including 5 deaths in one day in February 2016; the deceased were found with syringes still in their arms.

Other opiate analogs include **U-47700** which has been increasingly reported over the past few weeks in Central Illinois, Boston, Erie County, New York, New Jersey, and Pittsburgh. There have also been seizures of U-47700 seizures in Florida and at least 3 reported deaths in Pinellas County in 2016.

More than a kilo of **W-18** has been seized in Broward County. It is a synthetic opioid reported to be 100 times more potent than fentanyl. W-18 was part of a federal case in which the defendant received a 10 year sentenced for having had fentanyl or its analogs shipped to him from China with the help of a Canadian prison inmate. It is one of a series of 32 synthetic opioids discovered in the 1980s at the University of Alberta. W-18 seems to be the most powerful of the 'W' compounds. They have never been used clinically, and there has been virtually no scientific study of their actions, adverse effects, or reversibility. **Poisonous Opiate Analogs** are likely to be a major drug story of 2016.

Number of Drug Combinations Among 79 Fentanyl Deaths in Broward County, Florida 2015



Source: Office of the Medical Examiner and Trauma Services, Broward County



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