

CLINICAL PROVIDER QUICK TIPS

ADDRESSING FENTANYL USE IN PRIMARY CARE SETTINGS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CME AVAILABLE AT NO COST

UCLA

David Geffen School of Medicine

Integrated Substance Abuse Programs



Opioid and Stimulant Implementation Support
Training and Technical Assistance

Session Title

The Overdose Crisis: Rapid Shifts in Fentanyl and Novel Synthetic Substances

Presenter

Joseph Friedman, PhD, MPH

Center for Social Medicine, UCLA Medical School
University of California, Los Angeles

@JosephRFriedman 

JosephFriedman@mednet.ucla.edu



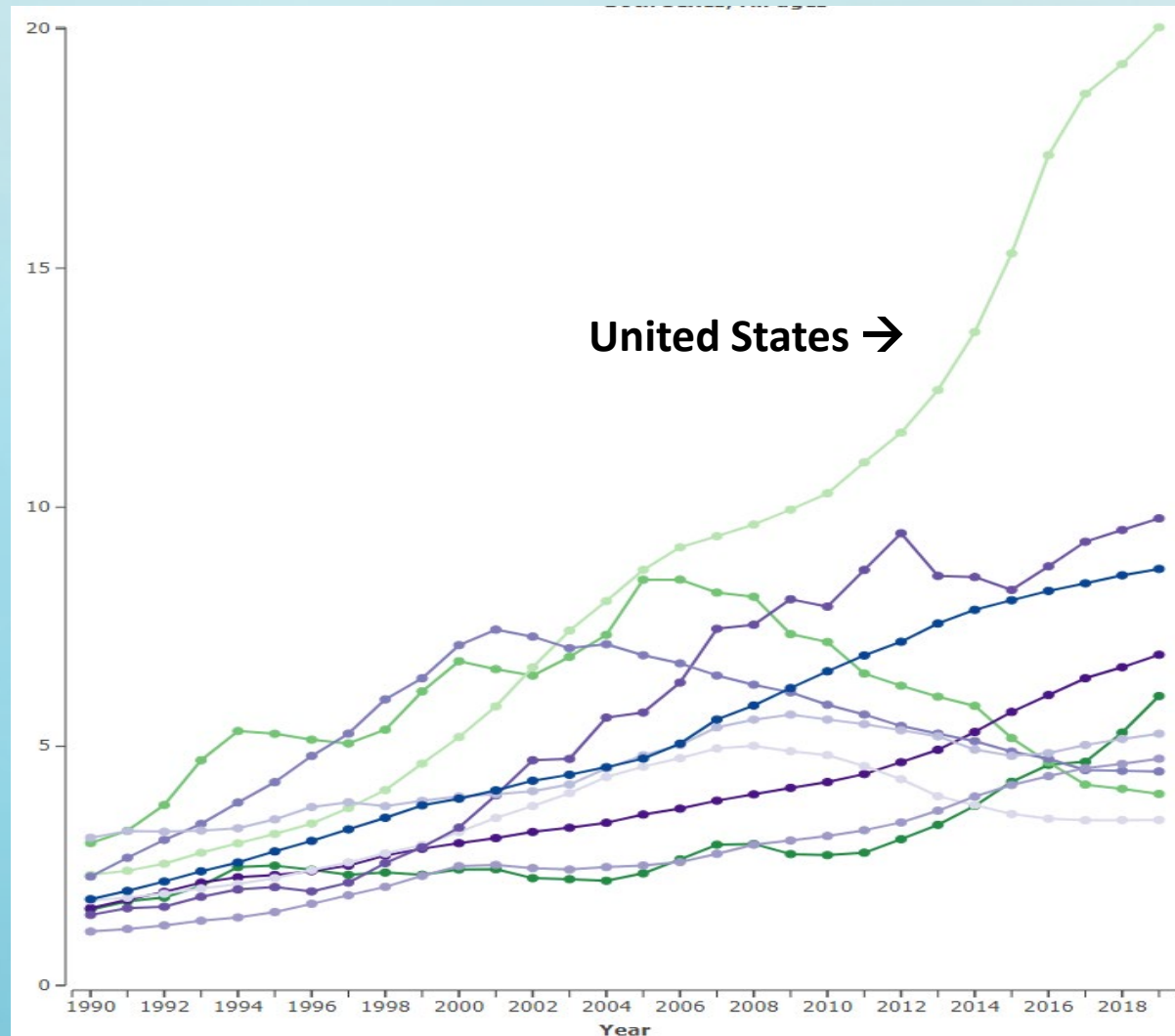
Takeaway Tips

- We are now in the ‘fourth wave’ of the US overdose crisis, driven by polysubstance combinations with illicit fentanyls.
- The illicit drug supply is rapidly shifting, creating new health risks for consumers.
- New clinical approaches are needed to address rising burden of disease.

QR codes are used for references throughout



A Uniquely American Problem

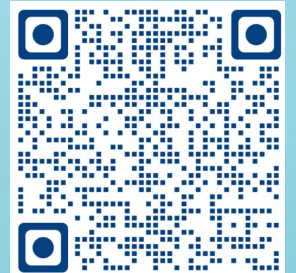
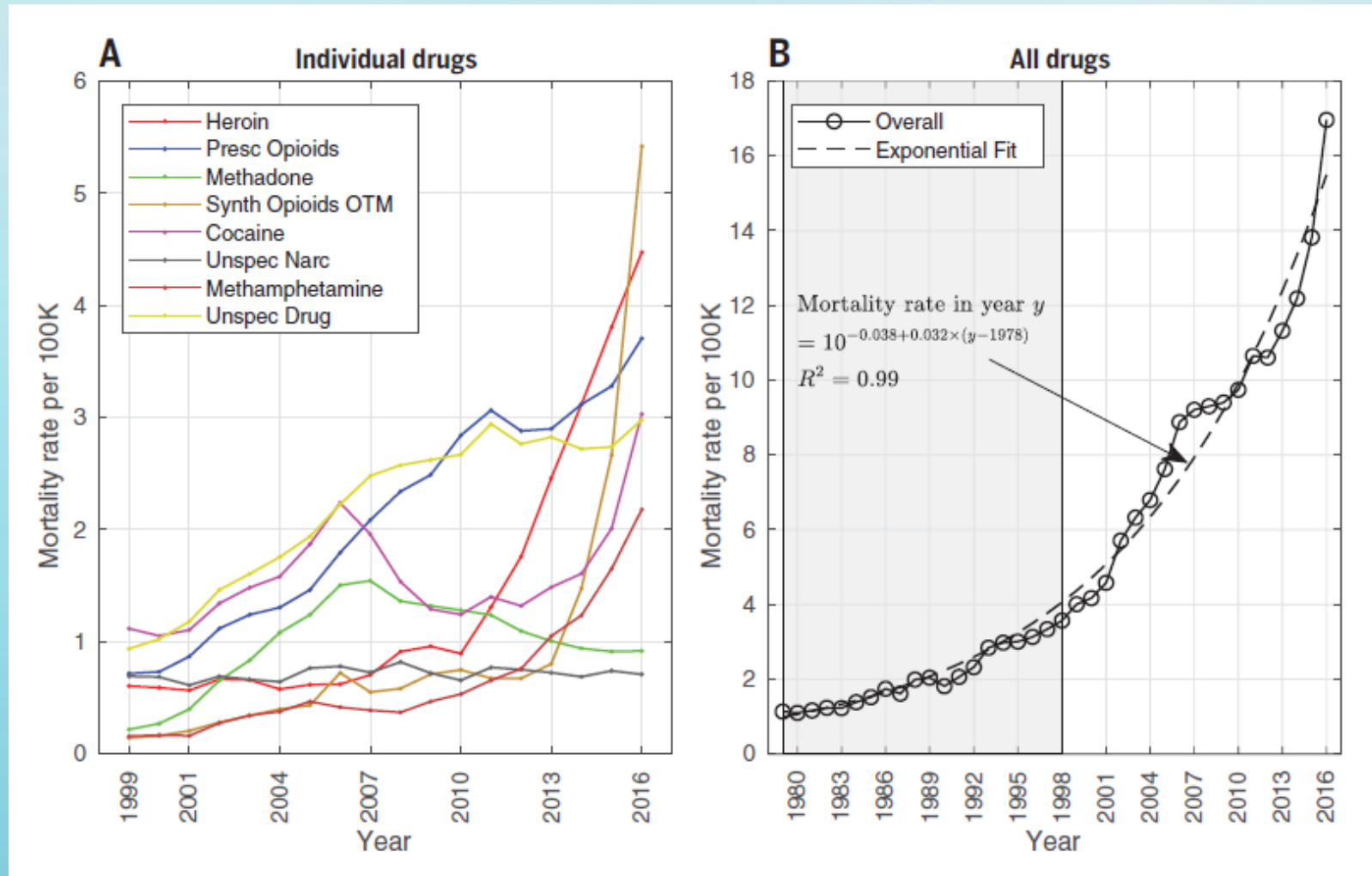


**Top 10 Countries
Drug Overdose Deaths
Per Capita 1990-2019**



Exponential Progression of the Overdose Crisis

Overdose Deaths – United States



“Four Waves” of the US Overdose Crisis



The 'Fourth Wave' of the Overdose Crisis

1. Driven by Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyls and Synthetic Opioids

2. Potent Synthetic Analogues + Polysubstance Use + Counterfeiting

3. Extreme Exacerbation During COVID-19

4. Sharply Rising Racial/Ethnic Disparities

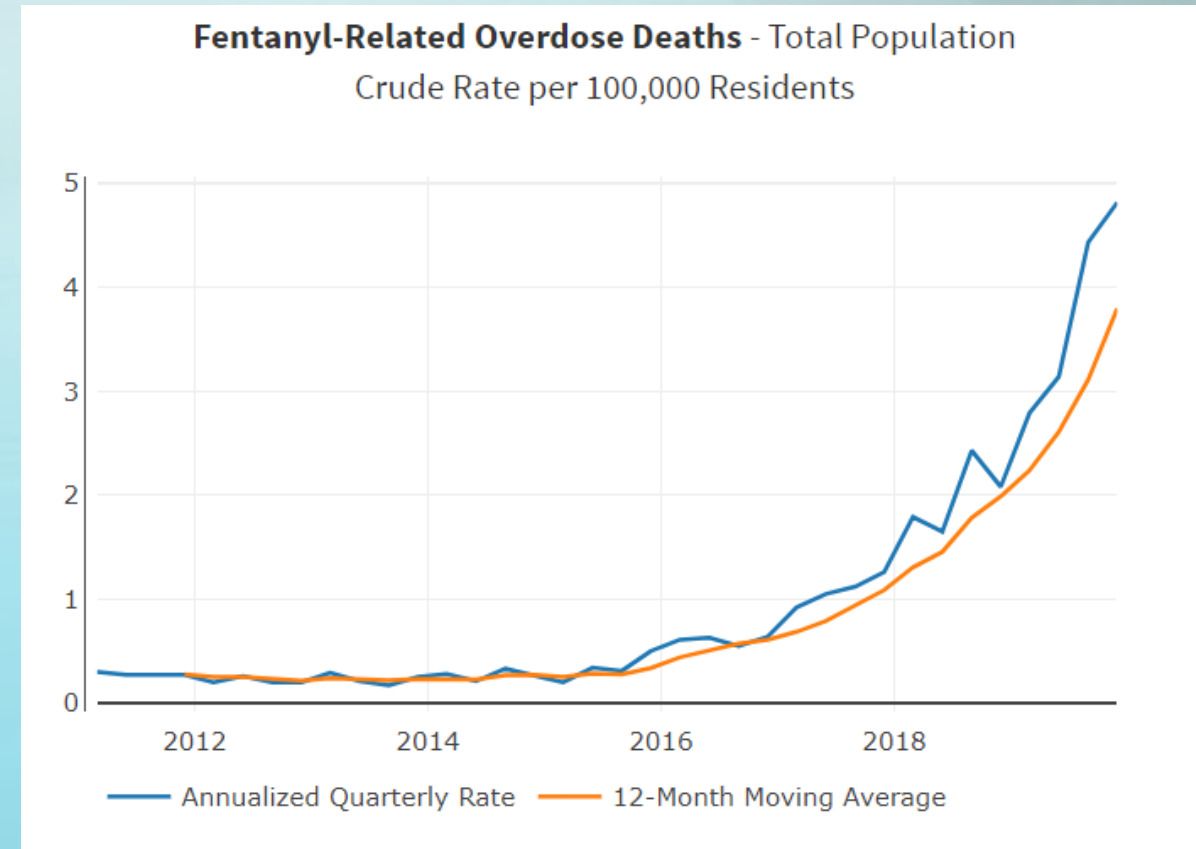


Illicit Fentanyls

Fentanyl and the Overdose Crisis

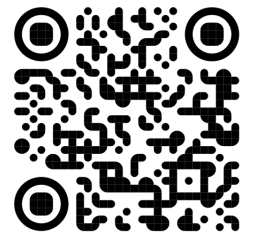
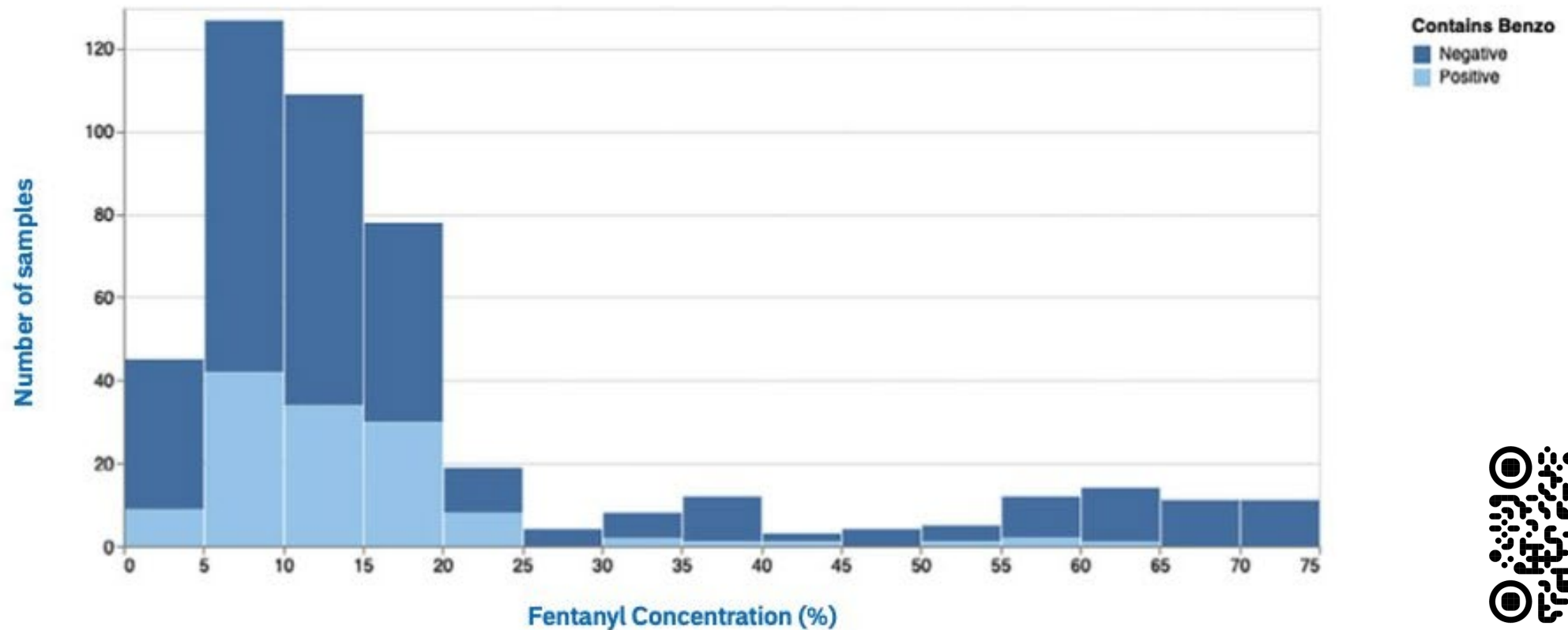
- Fentanyl is a family of synthetic opioid agonists many times stronger than traditional heroin.
- Illicitly-manufactured fentanyl has changed the risk environment of people who inject drugs.
- Shorter half life = more injections per day.
- Initially concentrated in the Eastern US, fentanyl is now moving West including proximate to US-Mexico border.
- Chocolate chip cookie effect.

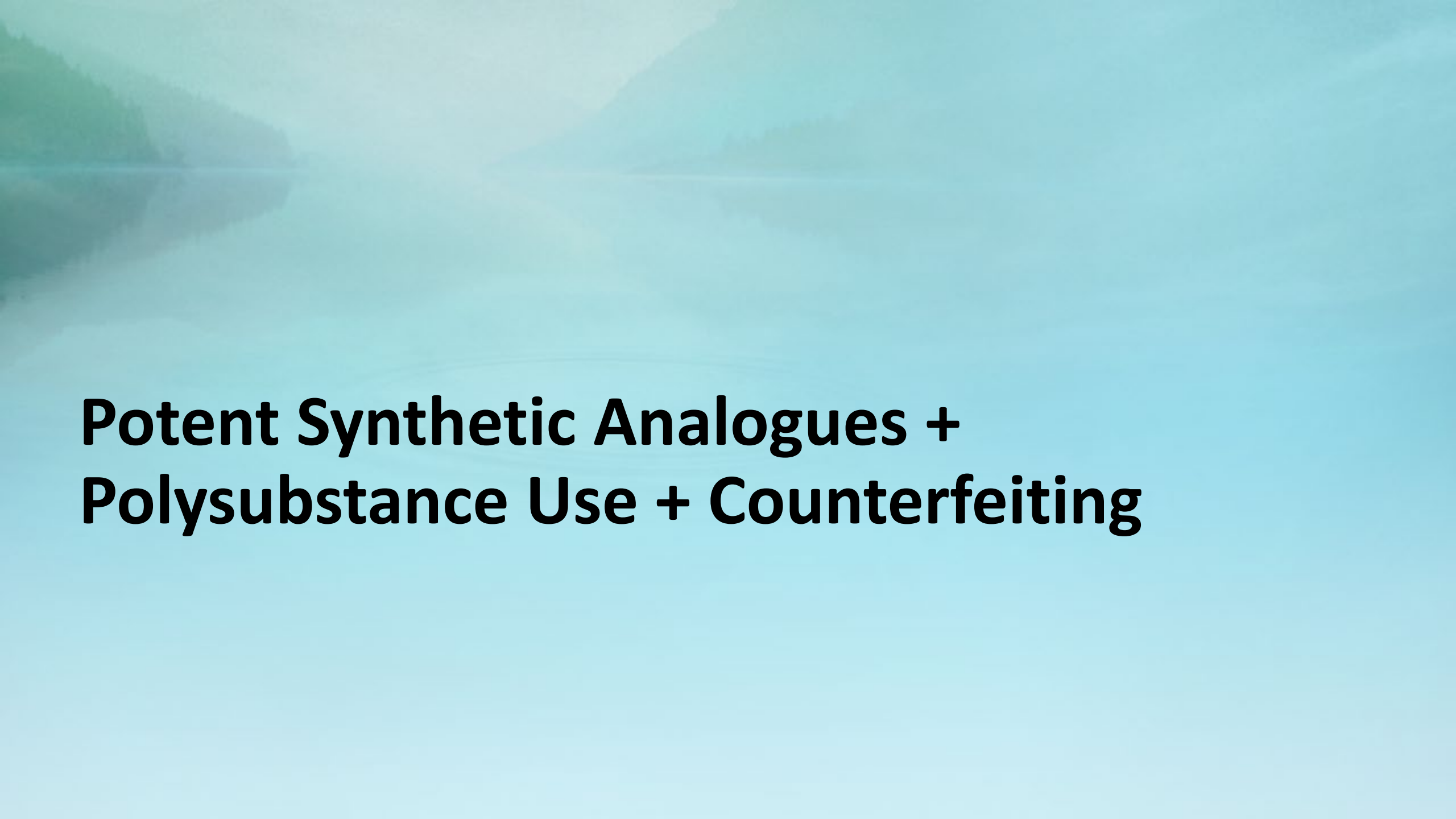
California



Fentanyl and the Overdose Crisis

Fentanyl Concentration of Opioid Drug Checking Samples in BC, August 2021

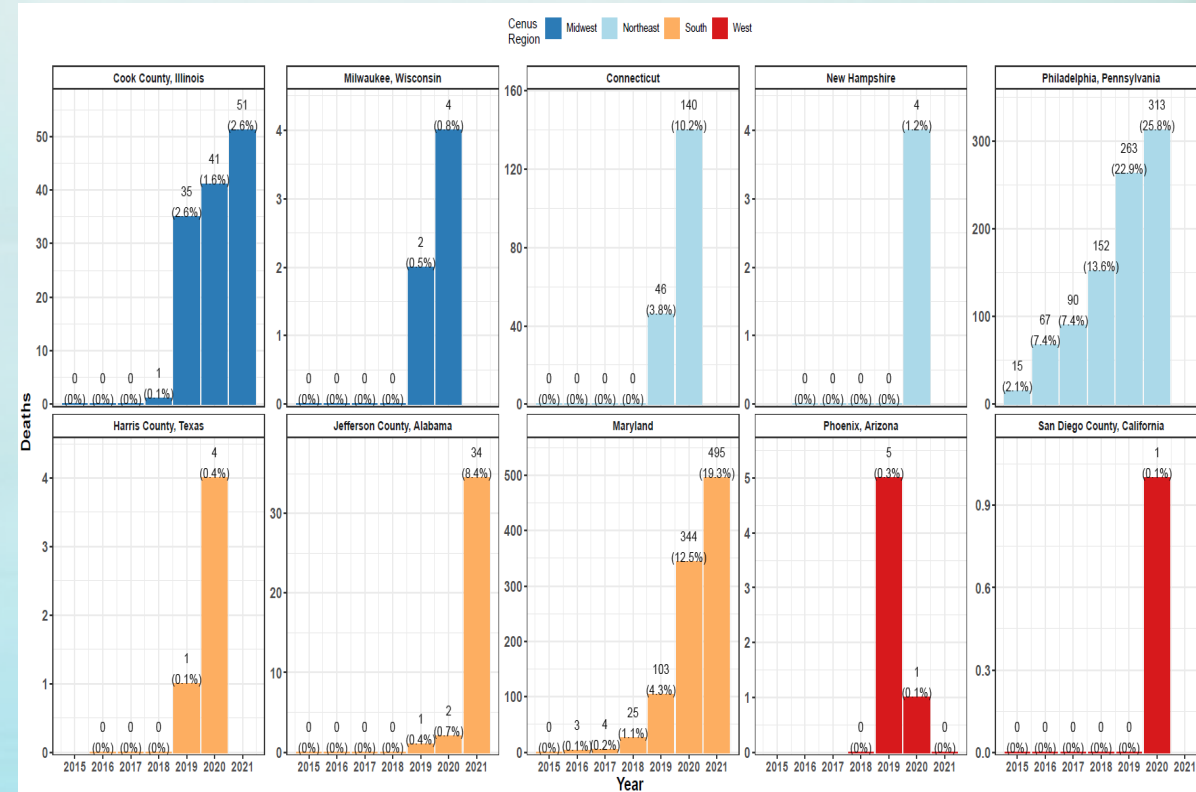




**Potent Synthetic Analogues +
Polysubstance Use + Counterfeiting**

Example of Xylazine

- Xylazine is a veterinary sedative, not approved for human consumption.
- Alpha-2 adrenergic agonist, similar to clonidine. Full receptor activity is unknown, matter of scientific debate and speculation.
- Been used for two decades in illicit drug market of Puerto Rico.
- Presence in Philadelphia since mid 2010s.
- Spreading nationally, growing exponentially, since ~2019.
- Prevalence rose from 0.4% of overdose deaths in 2015 to 6.7% in 2020.



ELSEVIER

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

Volume 233, 1 April 2022, 109380



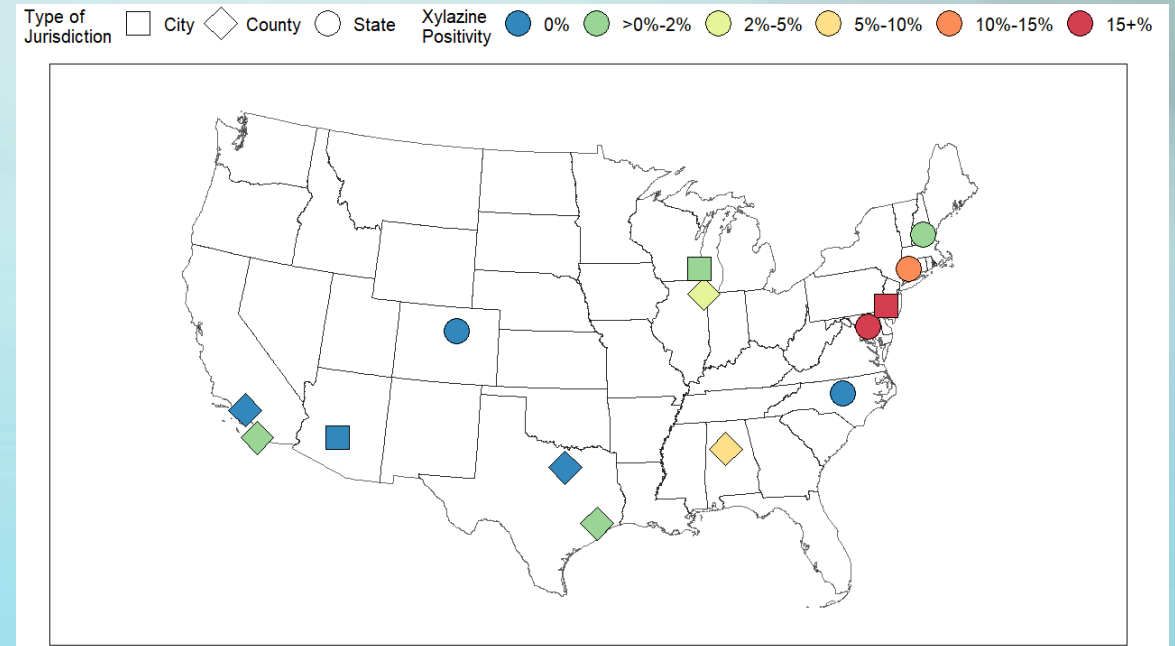
Xylazine spreads across the US: A growing component of the increasingly synthetic and polysubstance overdose crisis

Joseph Friedman ^{a, b, c}, Fernando Montero ^c, Phillippe Bourgois ^{a, b}, Rafik Wahbi ^d, Daniel Dye ^e, David Goodman-Meza ^f, Chelsea Shover ^{e, f}



Implications of Xylazine

- Virtually always found used in conjunction with illicit fentanyl.
- Changing nature of fatal overdose risk: resistant to naloxone.
- Implications for many other health issues among people who use drugs: soft tissue infection, nonfatal overdose, risk of assault, traffic accidents, etc.
- Xylazine shows us how fentanyl has ushered in a new wave of deadly synthetic drugs across several drug categories.
- Barrier lowered to producing many novel compounds.



Single Drug Sample

- Diphenhydramine
- 4-Fluorofentanyl
- Fentanyl
- Xylazine
- Cocaine
- Despropionyl-4-fluorofentanyl
- 4-ANPP
- 4F-Phenethyl-4-ANPP
- Flualprazolam





Clinical Implications

Naloxone-Resistant Overdose

- Fast-acting sedation via A-2 receptor. Typically a ~30 minute “nod” after administration.
- Degree of outright respiratory depression is controversial.
- Synergistic effect with opioids according to veterinary data.
- CNS depression, blunted response to airway occlusion.

Helpful treatment approaches:

- Still give naloxone only if respiratory depression is present.
- Manage airway in the field (place patient in recovery position, jaw thrust).
- Pulse ox in ED. Possible intubation.

Withdrawal Syndrome

- Physical dependence reported among chronic users.
- Anxiety, unease.
- Complicates MOUD treatment.
- Treat as benzo/alcohol withdrawal. Give benzodiazepines first line.

Other Health Risks

- Widely used in veterinary surgeries for anesthesia.
- Heavy sedation.
- Risk for sexual assault.
- Risk of traffic accidents.
- Soft tissue infection

Counseling

- Many patients want to avoid xylazine.
 - Drug checking.
 - Counseling on signs, symptoms, risks.
- Explain health risks, many safer options exist, even among illicit drug products.
- General counseling for risks associated with a polysubstance fentanyl-based drug supply.
 - Never use alone.
 - Carry naloxone, give it to close friends and family.
 - Go slow; be suspicious of drug supply every time you buy.

Articles
Referenced



Questions?

Joseph Friedman, PhD, MPH

Center for Social Medicine, UCLA Medical School

@JosephRFriedman 



THANK YOU

Clinical Provider Quick Tips

-- Addressing Fentanyl Use in Primary Care



For content information/questions:

slarkins@mednet.ucla.edu

For information about CME:

kvalencia@mednet.ucla.edu

Check website often for more Quick Tips Videos and Resources:

www.uclaisap.org/clinicalproviderquicktips

UCLA

David Geffen School of Medicine

Integrated Substance Abuse Programs