News From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Illicit Fentanyl Driving Opioid Overdose Deaths

In the last half of 2016, fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, was detected in 56.3% of the opioid overdose deaths in the 10 states that make up the CDC's Enhanced State Opioid Overdose Surveillance program, according to a recent CDC report.

Of the 2903 opioid overdose deaths involving fentanyl reported during this period, 97.1% of them were found by a medical examiner or coroner to be caused by fentanyl.

With specialized toxicology testing, fentanyl analogues were detected in 720 (14%) of the 5152 opioid overdose deaths in the 10 states. Carfentanil, estimated to be 10 000 times more potent than morphine, was the most commonly found analogue. Opioid deaths testing positive for carfentanil were concentrated in Ohio and West Virginia.

Other illicit drugs, in particular cocaine and confirmed or suspected heroin, were detected in 57% of deaths involving fentanyl and 51.3% of deaths involving fentanyl analogs.

According to the report, prior CDC research has found illicit fentanyl primarily responsible for the jump in US overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids from 2013 through 2016. During that period, annual overdose deaths from synthetic opioids (excluding methadone) increased from 3105 to approximately 20 000. Total US opioid overdose deaths exceeded 60 000 in 2016.

Previously, the CDC and the Drug Enforcement Administration reported that the use of illicitly manufactured fentanyl mixed with heroin, sometimes without users' knowledge, has been driving many fentanyl overdoses, especially east of the Mississippi River. The latest CDC analysis was consistent with that finding: At least half of opioid overdose deaths in 6 of the 7 surveillance program states east of the Mississippi tested positive for fentanyl.

In the fall of 2017, the CDC funded 33 jurisdictions to expand forensic toxicology testing to detect illicit opioids. Increased access to medication-assisted treatment and naloxone are also needed, according to the latest report.

More Than 1 in 5 Working Adults Use Some Form of Tobacco

Tobacco use among US working adults varies by industry and occupation, a recent CDC analysis found. The study used 2014-2016 data from the National Health Interview Survey.

Overall, nearly 33 million working adults, or 22%, reported that they currently used some tobacco product. The most common was cigarettes, with 15.4% of working adults reporting that they were current cigarette smokers, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and now smoking "every day" or "some days." Nearly 6% of working adults used other forms of combustible tobacco, including pipes, cigars, and hookahs; 3.6% used electronic cigarettes; and 3% used smokeless tobacco.

About 4.6% of working adults reported using more than 1 tobacco product. Tobacco use and use of multiple products was more common among men, whites, workers aged 18 to 34 years, people whose education did not go beyond high school, and those without health insurance.

By industry, tobacco use ranged from 11% of people in education to 34% among construction workers. By occupation, 9% of people who worked in life, physical, or social science used tobacco compared with a high of 37% of installation, maintenance, and repair workers. Small sample sizes necessitated suppressing tobacco use estimates for some industries, including the armed forces and management of companies and enterprises.

"These findings underscore the importance of opportunities for targeted efforts to reduce tobacco use among populations with the greatest prevalence of tobacco use, including multiple tobacco product users," the analysis concluded.

Previous research has shown that workers whose employers banned smoking were twice as likely to quit the habit as those whose workplace did not implement such a policy. Employers might want to consider offering workers comprehensive tobacco cessation programs, the authors suggested. **– Rita Rubin, MA**

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.

Top 5 Industries With the Highest Estimated Prevalence of Current Tobacco Use Among Working Adults, National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2014–2016[a]

Industry Group	% (95% CI) No Currently Employed Adults[b] (×1000)	Any Tobacco Product[c]	≥2 Tobacco Products[d]
Accommodation and food services	9907	29.9 (28.0-31.9)	7.0 (5.9-8.1)
Construction	9346	34.3 (32.3-36.3)	7.1 (6.0-8.3)
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	6641	30.0 (27.8-32.3)	6.9 (5.4-8.4)
Transportation and warehousing	6052	30.2 (27.6-32.8)	6.5 (5.1-7.9)
Mining	859	30.4 (23.3-37.5)	NR[e]

[a] Adults who reported "working at a job or business," "with a job or business but not at work," or "working, but not for pay, at a family-owned job or business" during the week before the interview.
[b] Weighted to provide national annual average estimates for current employment.
[c] Any tobacco product users were defined as persons who reported current use of cigarettes or other combustible tobacco or smokeless tobacco or e-cigarettes every day or some days (estimated n = 32.7 million).
[d] Persons who reported current use of 2 or more individual tobacco products (estimated n = 6.9 million).
[e] Not reported (NR) because the estimate was suppressed (relative standard error >30%).
Source: *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2017;66(42):1130-1135.

US Drug Enforcement Agency