Caracon Symposium 2025

The Fight Isn’t Over

October 13–17

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We are Greater Cincinnati's HIV nonprofit devoted to positively changing lives in the fight against HIV through:

Prevention

Promoting health and well-being in at-risk communities through evidence-based approaches to prevent disease and reduce the spread of HIV

Housing

Offering a variety of permanent housing support to prevent homelessness and to stabilize individuals living with HIV and their families

Care

Helping individuals living with HIV access the health care they need through medical case management and pharmacy services

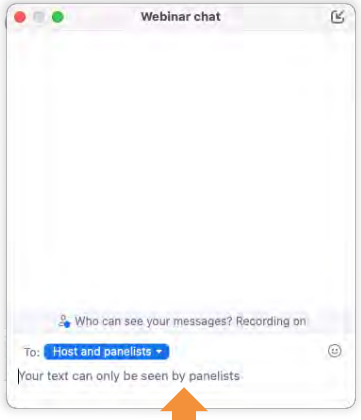
Learn more: caracole.org

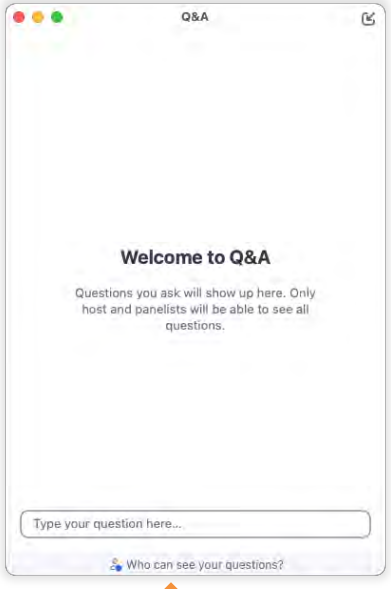
AETC AIDS Education & Training Center Program Midwest

Caracon Symposium 2025

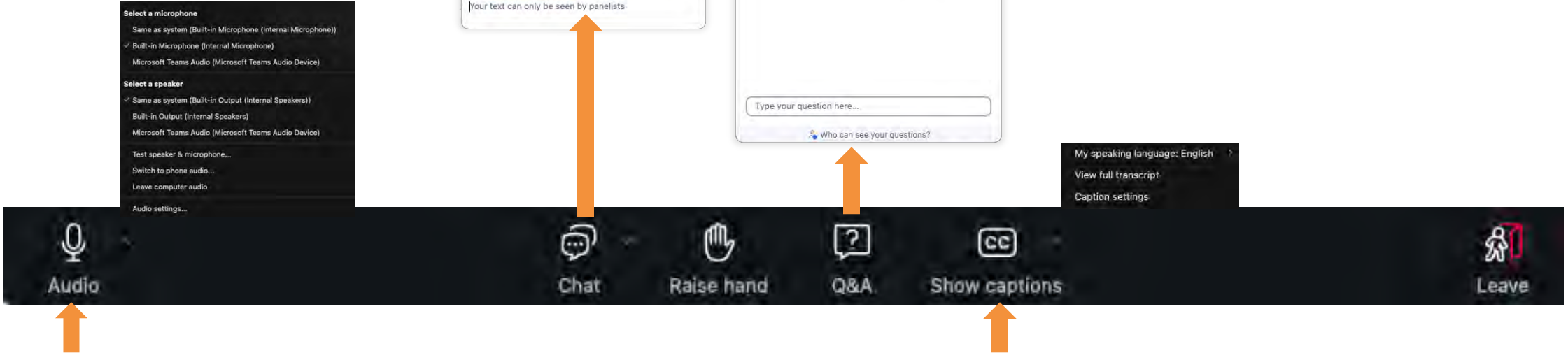
How to Use Zoom Webinar

Use Chat to converse with everyone on the webinar and for tech issue questions.





Use Q&A specifically for questions about the content. You may upvote questions from others. You may submit anonymously.



Audio Settings

Caption Settings

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Special thanks to our presenting partners:

MATEC
MIDWEST AIDS TRAINING + EDUCATION CENTER

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Evaluations and Credits

Evaluations recommended for all attendees

Required for CECs

- Link in today's chat and as a post-webinar pop-up
- Must be completed by end of business day (5:00 PM ET) today

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Caracon Symposium 2025
Wednesday, October 15

Hamilton County Public Health Drug Checking Program

Presenters: Devin Knutson, MPH and Cole Stines, MPH

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HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DRUG CHECKING PROGRAM

DEVIN KNUTSON, MPH

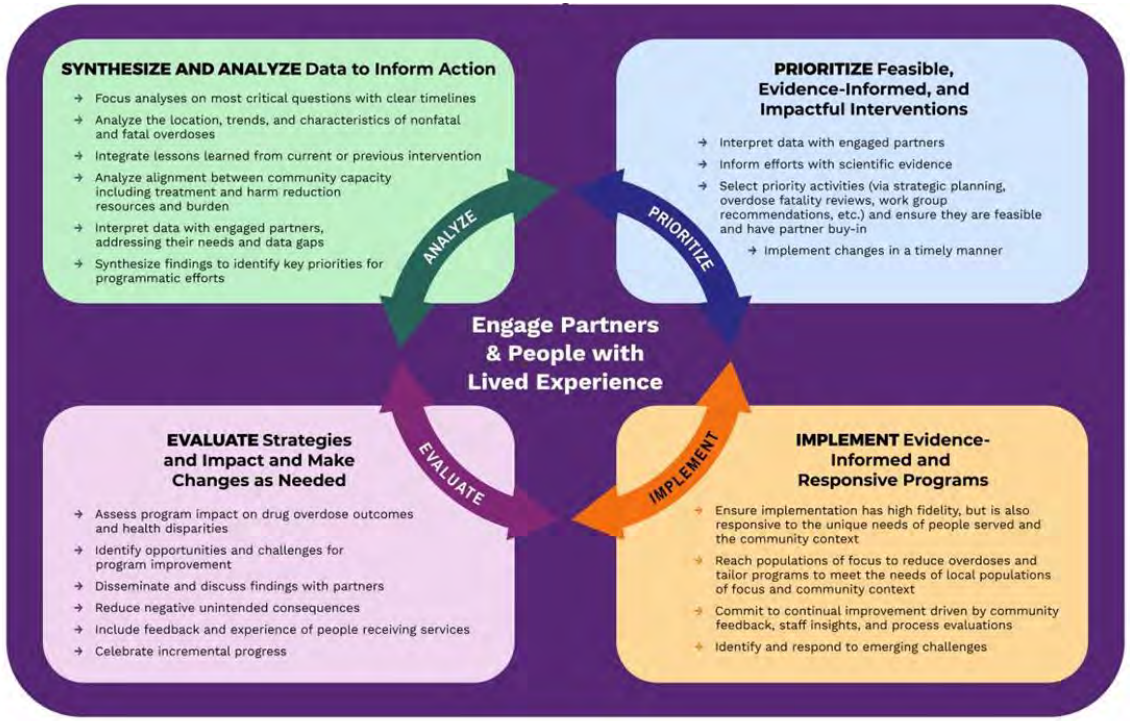
COLE STINES, MPH

HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

BACKGROUND

WHEN DID DRUG CHECKING START IN HAMILTON COUNTY, AND HOW IS IT FUNDED?

DRUG CHECKING AT HCPH



- **Began January 2024**
- **Current availability**
  - Monday through Friday 8 AM to 4 PM
  - Northside
    - 2nd and 4th Thursdays until 7:30 PM
    - 1st Wednesday until 6:30 PM
  - Weekends and special events as needed
- **Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant**
- **~250 samples to date**

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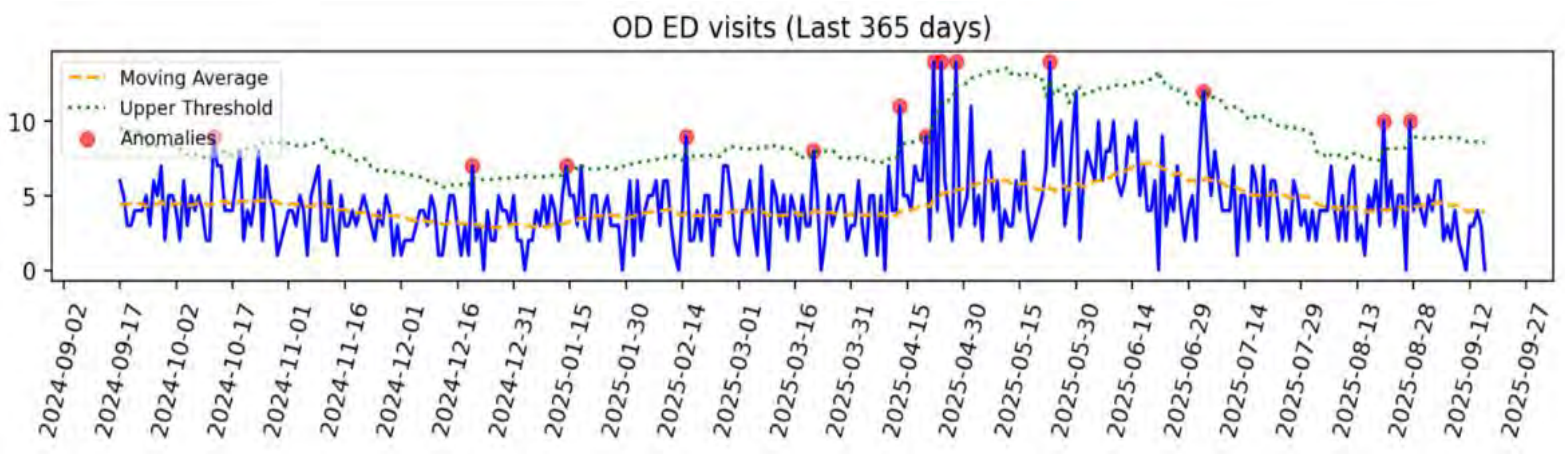
SURVEILLANCE AND COLLABORATION

WHAT DATA IS USED TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY, AND HOW DOES IT APPLY TO THE DRUG CHECKING PROGRAM?

STATE AND REGIONAL SURVEILLANCE

- **EpiCenter**
  - Non-fatal overdoses
- **Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics**
  - Occurrence and resident fatal overdoses
- **Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC)**
  - Strategic Intelligence Analysts
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**
  - Regional Intelligence Analysts



LOCAL SURVEILLANCE

- **Law enforcement**
  - Hamilton County Heroin Task Force
  - Newtown Chief of Police
- **Medical professionals**
  - Cincinnati Drug and Poison Information Center (DPIC)
  - University of Cincinnati Health
- **Emergency medical services dispatches**
  - Hamilton County
  - Norwood
  - City of Cincinnati
- **Coroner**
  - Preliminary toxicology report
  - Drug seizures
  - Daily coroner report
- **People who use drugs (PWUD)**
  - Caracole Empowerment Group
  - SAFE Services syringe service program (SSP)
  - Drug checking program

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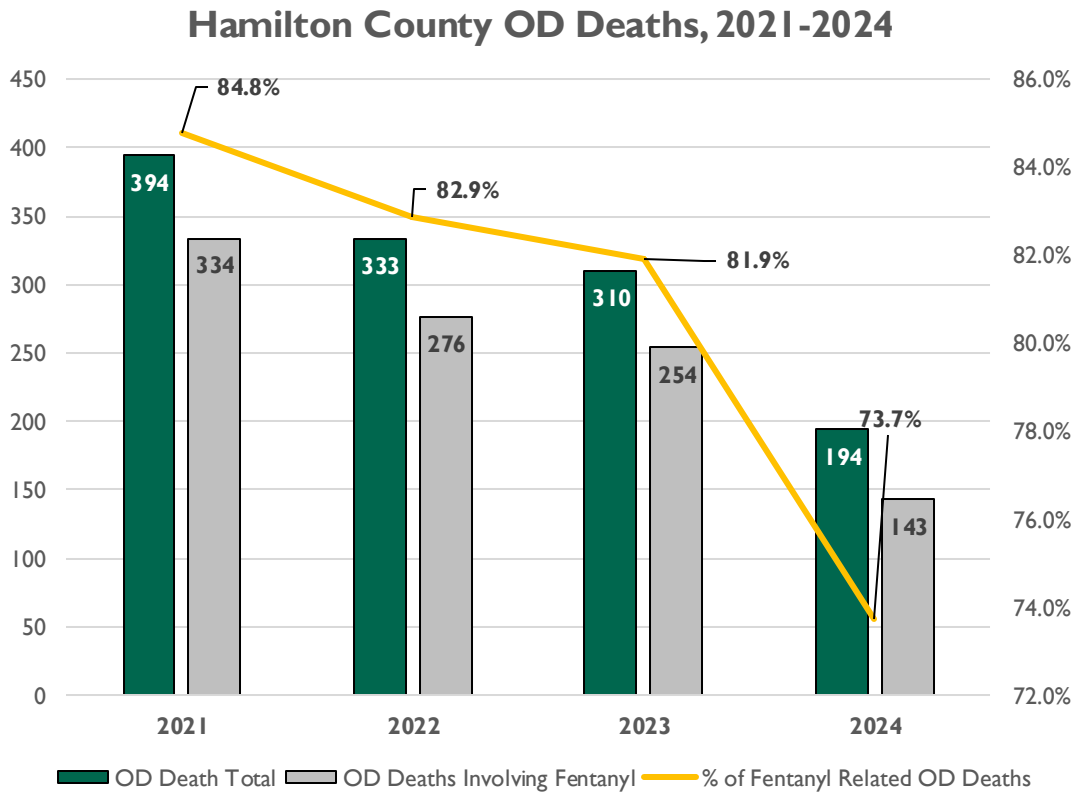
HAMILTON COUNTY OVERDOSE MORTALITY

For 2024:

- Age-adjusted overdose mortality rate
  - 23 deaths per 100,000 individuals
- Overdose deaths
  - 194 total
- Overdose deaths involving fentanyl
  - 143 total
  - ~74% of all overdose deaths



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DRUG CHECKING PROCESS COLLABORATORS

- Cuyahoga County, Ohio
- Franklin County, Ohio
- Hennepin County, Minnesota
- King County, Washington
- Remedy Alliance

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SAMPLE COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

HOW ARE SAMPLES COLLECTED AND PROCESSED?

CURRENT SAMPLE TYPES ACCEPTED

- **All SSP sites**
  - Cottons
  - Cookers
  - Drug testing strips
  - Syringe plungers
- **Limited SSP sites, call-in, or community events**
  - Pills
  - Powders or crystals
  - Plant material
  - Other paraphernalia

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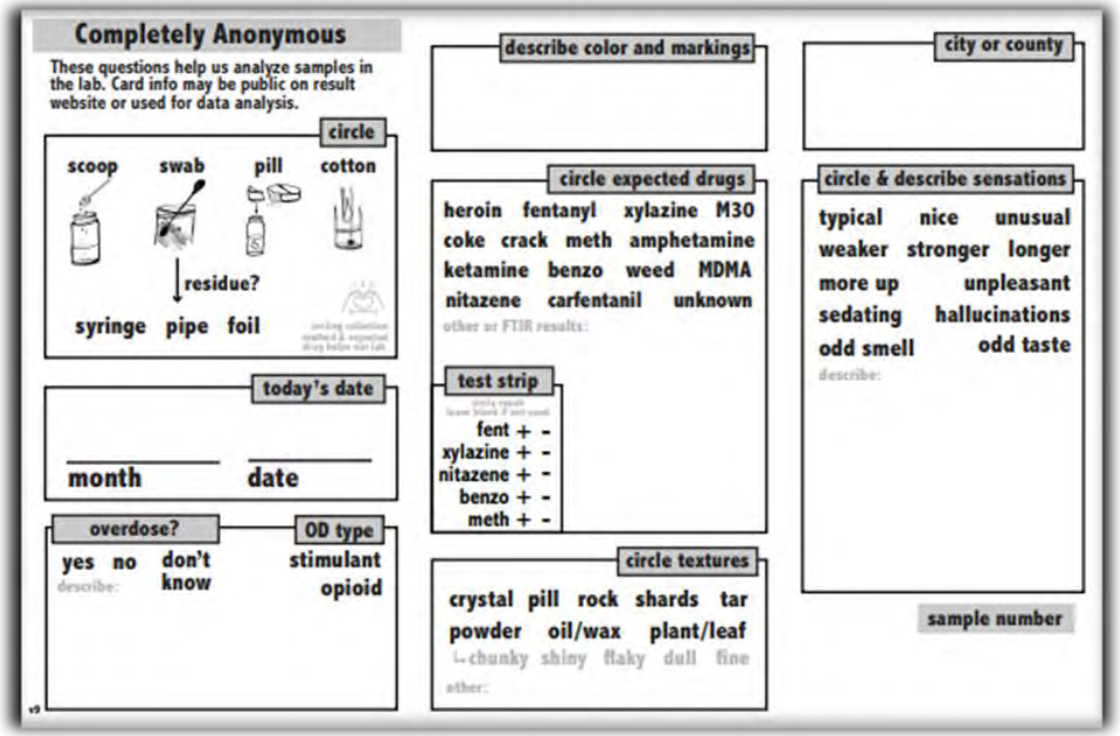
DATA GATHERING

- **REDCap survey primarily based on UNC card**
- **Tablet-based using REDCap app**
  - Barcoded bags
- **RaDAR envelope**
  - Client ID
  - Sample type, i.e., syringe plunger
  - Substance makeup, i.e., powder
  - If the substance was involved in an overdose



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SAMPLE PROCESSING

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA (UNC) STREET DRUG ANALYSIS LAB

- **Part of UNC Injury Prevention Research Center**
- **Started in 2022**
- **Exactive (high resolution) gas chromatography mass spectrometry (GC-MS)**
  - Untargeted search
  - Pure standard verification of identified substances
- **Libraries**
  - SWGDRUG MS Library Version 3.10 (Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Seized Drugs)
  - Cayman Chemical
  - NIST 20
- **Processing time ~ 3 weeks**

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RAPID DRUG ANALYSIS & RESEARCH (RADAR) LAB

- **Part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)**
- **Started ~ 2019**
- **Direct analysis in real time mass spectrometry (DART-MS)**
  - All samples
- **Liquid chromatography – tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)**
  - Isomers
  - New compounds (to the program)
  - Inconclusive DART-MS results
- **Processing time ~ 1 week**

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RESULTS

- **REDCap**
  - API used to send survey results to drive
- **Opioid Data Lab**
  - API used to send UNC lab analysis results to drive
- **RaDAR spreadsheet**
- **CDC gets data directly from UNC and NIST for reporting**
- **UNC Street Drug Analysis website for participants**

Hamilton County Drug Checking Sample Results

Number	Date Collected	Assumed to be	Primary Substances Detected	Trace Amounts	Appearance	Unusual Effects	Involved in OD
1	1/3/2024	methamphetamine	dimethyl sulfone (methylsulfonylmethane MSM); methamphetamine		white crystals	weird; wrong; more up; unpleasant	no
2	1/3/2024	fentanyl	fentanyl; 4-ANPP; xylazine		light blue powder	more down; sedating; unusual taste	no
3	1/3/2024	fentanyl; xylazine	phenethyl 4-ANPP; xylazine; ethyl 4-ANPP; 4-ANPP; fentanyl		tan and white shiny powder	nice; long; more down; Sedating	no
4	1/3/2024	fentanyl; xylazine	heroin; xylazine; 4-ANPP; medetomidine; fentanyl	acetylcodeine; 6-MAM	tan and white shiny powder	nice; stronger; sedating;	no
5	1/3/2024	fentanyl	4-ANPP; xylazine; fentanyl		light purple powder	normal	no
6	1/3/2024	fentanyl	phenethyl 4-ANPP; p-fluorofentanyl; fentanyl		powder		no
7	1/4/2024	fentanyl	4-ANPP; cocaine; diphenhydramine; 1,3Diacetin; fentanyl; phenethyl 4-ANPP	bromazolam; gabapentin; xylazine; p-fluorofentanyl; heroin; 2-fluoro deschloroketamine; ethyl 4-ANPP; MMB-FUBINACA; p-fluoro phenethyl 4-ANPP; dimethyl sulfone (methylsulfonylmethan MSM)	not provided		no
8	1/8/2024	unknown	4-ANPP; fentanyl; xylazine	Cocaine	pink; blue; green		yes
9	1/8/2024	unknown	cocaine		not provided		no
10	2/1/2024	fentanyl	4-ANPP; xylazine; fentanyl		white powder; chunky	normal	no
11	2/6/2024	fentanyl	heroin; fentanyl; 4-ANPP	ethyl 4-ANPP; 6-MAM; Phenethyl 4-ANPP	light tan powder; dull	normal	no
12	2/7/2024	fentanyl	p-fluorofentanyl; depropionyl p-fluorofentanyl; 4-ANPP; fentanyl	Heroin	white powder; dull	normal	no
13	3/6/2024	cocaine	Cocaine		white powder	normal	yes
14	3/6/2024	cocaine; crack	Cocaine		white powder; flaky; dull		no
15	3/6/2024	methamphetamine	Methamphetamine		white crystals		no
16	4/3/2024	heroin; fentanyl	4-ANPP; ibuprofen; fentanyl; Ethyl 4-ANPP; lidocaine; xylazine	phenethyl 4-ANPP	white powder; chalky	unpleasant	no
17	4/3/2024	heroin; fentanyl	Cocaine* Insufficient sample		white powder	normal	no
18	4/23/2024	fentanyl	xylazine; methamphetamine; despropionyl p-fluorofentanyl; 4-ANPP; fentanyl; 1,3 Diacetin	N-pyrrolidino-etonitazene; p-fluoro phenethyl 4-ANPP; p-fluorofentanyl; phenethyl 4-ANPP; acetaminophen; benzocaine	purple	more up; longer	no
19	4/23/2024	fentanyl	xylazine; N-desethyl etonitazene	4-ANPP; dimethyl sulfone (methylsulfonylmethane MSM); diphenhydramine; heroin; fentanyl; methamphetamine	powder	sedating	no
20	4/23/2024	fentanyl	methamphetamine; xylazine; 4-ANPP; fentanyl		white and purple	stronger; more down; sedating	no
21	4/23/2024	fentanyl; xylazine	cocaine, despropionyl p-fluorofentanyl, lidocaine, 4-ANPP, 1,3Diacetin, caffeine, fentanyl	p-fluorofentanyl	white powder; dull	unpleasant; sedating	no

Updated 3/4/2025

Red = Emerging Substances

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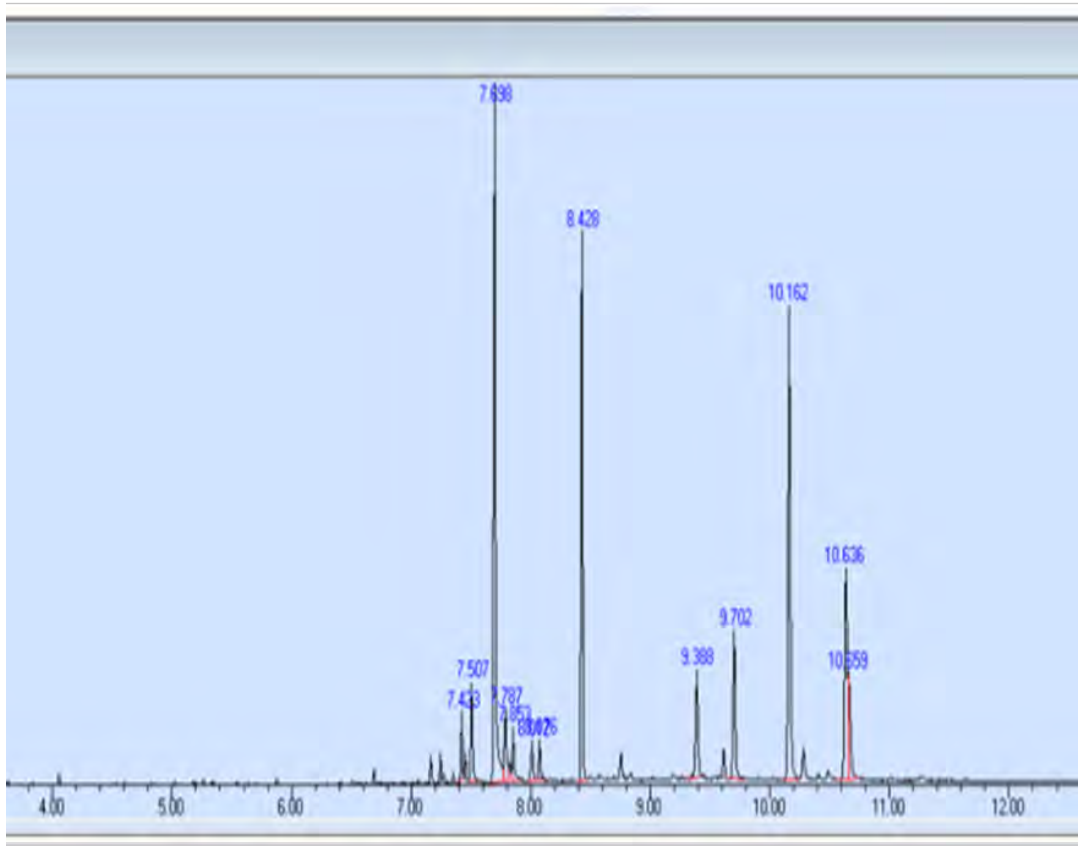
SUBSTANCES IDENTIFIED AND ALERTS

WHAT SUBSTANCES HAVE BEEN FOUND, AND HOW IS THE COMMUNITY INFORMED?

GC-MS ANALYSIS

- **Sample assumed to be heroin and/or fentanyl**
- **Substances identified**
  - 6-monoacetylmorphine
  - cocaine
  - medetomidine
  - heroin
  - xylazine
  - fentanyl
  - 4-ANPP
  - phenethyl 4-ANPP



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TOP SUBSTANCES IDENTIFIED SINCE 2024

Substance	# of Times Found in Samples
Fentanyl	137
4-ANPP	105
Xylazine	82
Methamphetamine	77
Cocaine	63
Medetomidine	60
Acetaminophen	48
Lidocaine	46
Diphenhydramine	41
Phenethyl 4-ANPP	40
Heroin	31
6-monoacetylmorphine (6-MAM)	25
Bis(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-4-piperidyl) sebacate	19
Dimethyl sulfone (methylsulfonylmethane MSM)	19
1,3-Diacetin	15
Parafluorofentanyl	15
Caffeine	14

** As of 9/17/2025 **

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Substance	First Identified	# of Samples
Medetomidine	January 2024	60
Nitazenes	April 2024	19
Bis(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-4-piperidyl) sebacate (BTMPS)	August 2024	19
Carfentanil	September 2025	2

NOVEL & EMERGING SUBSTANCES

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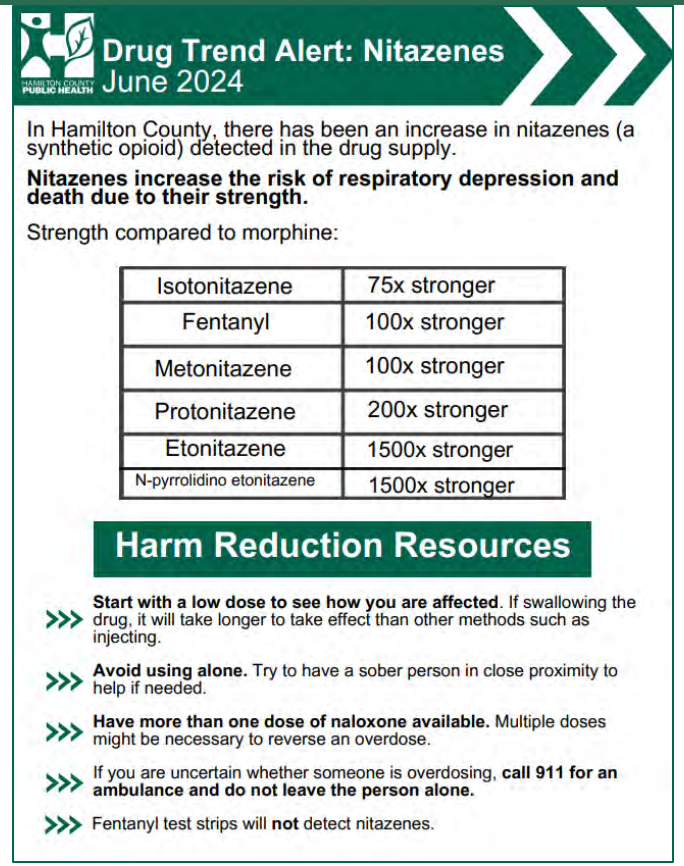
Substance	First Identified	# of Samples	Response
Medetomidine	January 2024	60	Awareness & education Test strips: July 2025
Nitazenes	April 2024	19	Public Alert: July 2024 Test strips: July 2025
Bis (2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-4-piperidyl) sebacate (BTMPS)	August 2024	19	Monitoring and community awareness
Carfentanil	September 2025	2	Monitoring future samples and targeted outreach

COMMUNITY IMPACT

ALERTS

- **Hamilton County Office of Addiction Response**
  - Shared with coalition
- **SAFE Services syringe service program**
  - White board
  - Vocal
- **Empowerment group**
  - Vocal
- **Hamilton County Public Health website and social media**



Drug Trend Alert: Nitazenes
June 2024

In Hamilton County, there has been an increase in nitazenes (a synthetic opioid) detected in the drug supply.

Nitazenes increase the risk of respiratory depression and death due to their strength.

Strength compared to morphine:

Isotonitazene	75x stronger
Fentanyl	100x stronger
Metonitazene	100x stronger
Protonitazene	200x stronger
Etonitazene	1500x stronger
N-pyrrolidino etonitazene	1500x stronger

Harm Reduction Resources

- **Start with a low dose to see how you are affected**. If swallowing the drug, it will take longer to take effect than other methods such as injecting.
- **Avoid using alone.** Try to have a sober person in close proximity to help if needed.
- **Have more than one dose of naloxone available.** Multiple doses might be necessary to reverse an overdose.
- If you are uncertain whether someone is overdosing, **call 911 for an ambulance and do not leave the person alone.**
- Fentanyl test strips will **not** detect nitazenes.

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FUTURE GOALS AND TAKEAWAYS

WHERE IS THE PROGRAM HEADED, AND WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

HCPH DRUG CHECKING GOING FORWARD

- Provide point of care drug checking
- Establish a dashboard to disseminate results
- Provide drug checking services at more locations
- Plan and participate in more community events
- Develop partnerships with surrounding counties and medical professionals

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PRACTICAL KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Drug checking can reduce the likelihood of drug overdoses in communities.
- Advancing technologies make drug checking easier and more accurate.
- Collaboration amongst multiple partners is key to a drug checking program's success.
- Drug checking empowers PWUD to make informed decisions about supply.

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QUESTIONS?

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