

International Overdose Awareness Day — August 31, 2016

August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day, a global event that aims to raise awareness that overdose death is preventable. Goals include providing awareness regarding the risk for overdose, providing information on community services, and preventing and reducing drug-related harm by supporting evidence-based policy and practice (<http://www.overdoseday.com>).

In 2015, the Drug Enforcement Administration and CDC released alerts identifying illicitly manufactured fentanyl as a threat to public health and safety (1,2). Although fentanyl is available as a prescription medication for treating severe pain, including cancer-related pain, the current epidemic of synthetic opioid-involved overdose deaths largely involves illicitly manufactured fentanyl that is mixed with or sold as heroin (1,3).

In contrast to the 2005–2007 fentanyl overdose outbreak, when deaths were confined to several states, the current epidemic is unprecedented in scope and, as described in a report in this issue of *MMWR*, multiple states in several regions of the United States are reporting substantial increases in fatal synthetic opioid-involved overdoses, primarily driven by fentanyl-involved overdose deaths. Further information and data about fentanyl from CDC are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/fentanyl.html>.

References

1. Drug Enforcement Administration. DEA issues nationwide alert on fentanyl as threat to health and public safety. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration; 2015. <http://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2015/hq031815.shtml>
2. CDC. CDC Health Advisory: increases in fentanyl drug confiscations and fentanyl-related overdose fatalities. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2015. <http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00384.asp>
3. Drug Enforcement Administration. National heroin threat assessment summary—updated. DEA intelligence report. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration; 2016. https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq062716_attach.pdf

Fentanyl Law Enforcement Submissions and Increases in Synthetic Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — 27 States, 2013–2014

R. Matthew Gladden, PhD¹; Pedro Martinez, MPH¹; Puja Seth, PhD¹

In March and October 2015, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and CDC, respectively, issued nationwide alerts identifying illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF) as a threat to public health and safety (1,2). IMF is unlawfully produced fentanyl, obtained through

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Continuing Education examination available at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/cme/conted_info.html#weekly.

