



Community Drug Checking in Washington State

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Zoom Webinar Logistics

- Only panelists and hosts can share video and audio.
- Please enter your comments and questions in the chat for the Q&A section.
- Be respectful and stay curious.
- If you are with the media and plan to report on this webinar, please send us an email and let us know.

- Overview

- What is drug checking & how does it add new info about drugs?
- What is the Community Drug Checking Network?
- Collaboration for enhanced wrap around care
- Community drug checking in WA – what's next?

- Guest Speaker(s) “Tech Talks”

- What does drug checking look like at sites in WA?
- What are the benefits for programs? For participants?

- A Dive into Drug Data in WA

- Statewide drug checking results & other data sources

- Q & A

What is drug checking?

Primary goals:

- Filling information gaps and providing knowledge to support people who use drugs.
- Supports making better-informed decisions around drug use and reducing risks of overdose and other health consequences.

Secondary goals:

- Provide additional, up to date information about the drug supply to local and stakeholders including:
 - health care and drug treatment providers,
 - first responders, and
 - public health
 - Could inform safety alerts
 - Triangulates data e.g. fatal overdose toxicology and police evidence testing

Types of drug checking models:

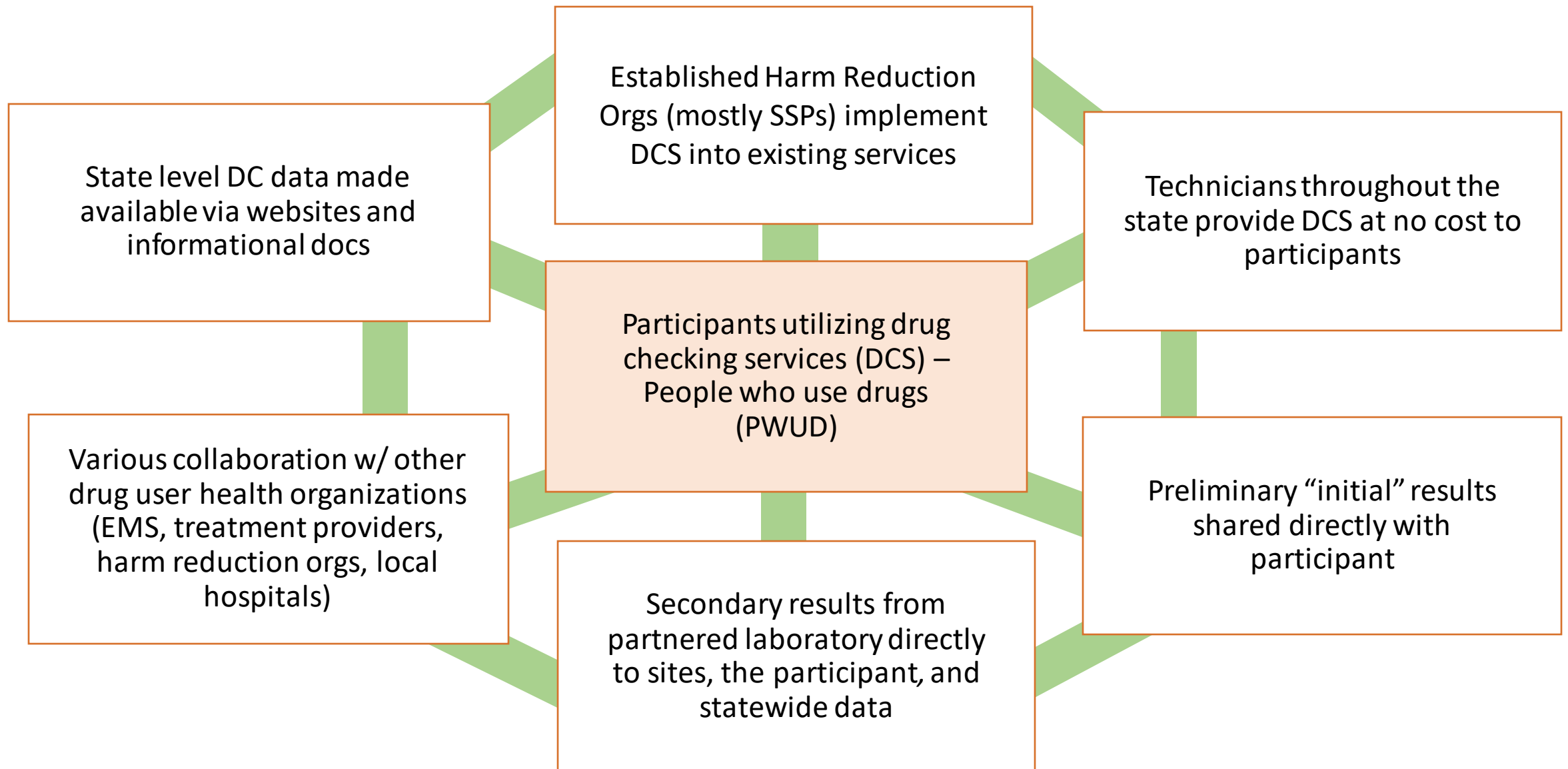
- People who use drugs can "self-test" their drugs with immunoassay test strips (e.g., fentanyl test strips) distributed by harm reduction and other programs.
- Point-of-care testing model – where trained staff uses a combination of testing technologies to test community members' drugs.

- + Provides insights into the drug supply at the level of people who use drugs which is most relevant for people's health (vs large drug busts or border seizures)
- + An important complement to other drug data.
- NOT a representative sample of all drugs nor representative of particular drugs. Entirely dependent on who brings in which drugs.
- Point of care information is incomplete.

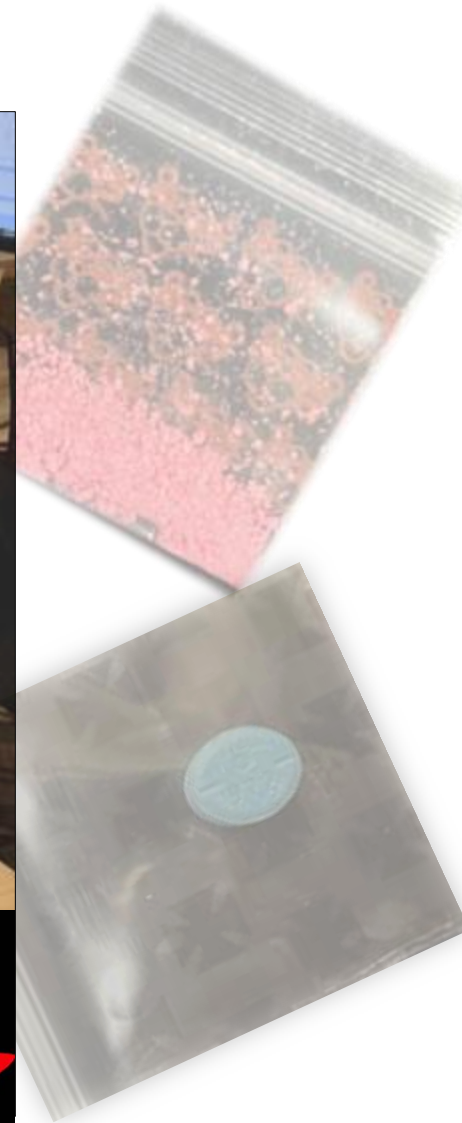
- The **WA State Community Drug Checking Network** (CDCN) is a partnership of existing harm reduction organizations around WA State that are providing community-level drug checking alongside related harm reduction services.
- ADAI provides technical assistance, training, and operational support to the network, in collaboration with Public Health – Seattle & King County.

- **6 “full” sites**
 - Includes onsite FTIR machine and immunoassay test strips (fentanyl, xylazine and benzodiazepine)
 - Samples sent to an outside lab for secondary testing
- **3 “lite” sites**
 - Immunoassay test strips (fentanyl, xylazine, benzodiazepine, and methamphetamine)
 - Samples sent to an outside lab for secondary testing
- **Data as of 04/30/024**
 - 782 participants served
 - 1,290 samples tested by FTIR
 - 1,108 samples tested by GCMS

A Community Network



Tech Talks with Lex Schreiber



Drug Checking in a Peer-Led Harm Reduction Org

- People with lived experience, drug users and people in recovery providing harm reduction services and supplies.
- Increases accessibility for PWUD who otherwise have reservation about accessing services.
- Uniquely positioned to have destigmatizing conversations about the sample(s) provided.
- Participant led conversations -
 - *What do you want to know about your drugs?*
 - *What can I tell you about your drugs?*
 - *How can we co-create knowledge about your drugs to help you make informed decisions and reduce risks associated with an unregulated market?*



What We See?

- A wide range of various drug types intended for use in various settings
- A wide variety of PWUD from different walks of life with different reasons for using drugs
- Non-judgmental harm reduction conversations
- Making appropriate referrals for other services

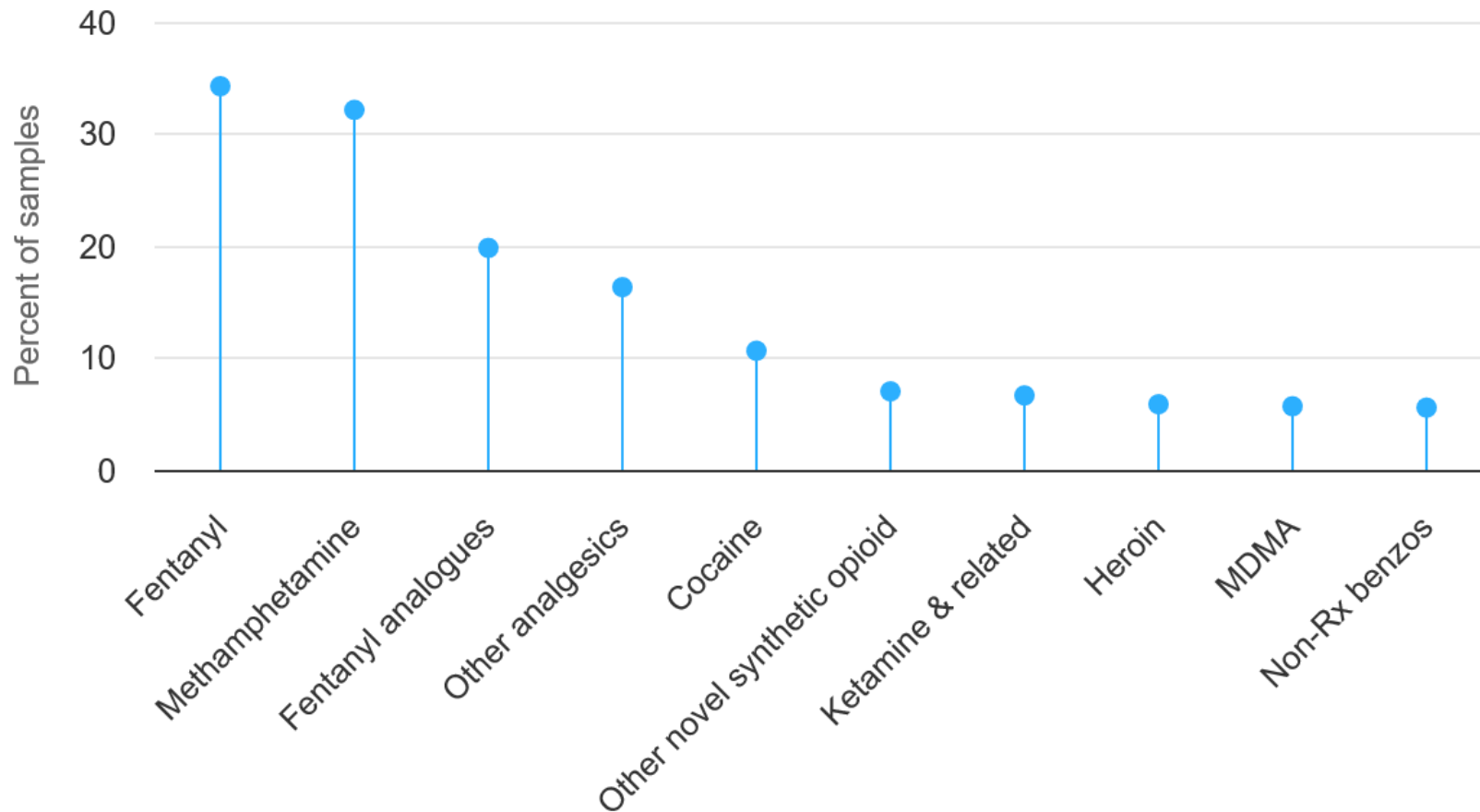
Primary motivators for accessing the service -

- personal physical and mental health
- overall well-being
- community safety

CDCN Drug Checking Data – Webpage Walkthrough

WA CDCN Data

Top 10 drug category results among drug checking samples to date in Washington



- Data from "full sites" based upon GCMS secondary drug testing
- These are cumulative data from Q3 2022- Q2 2024

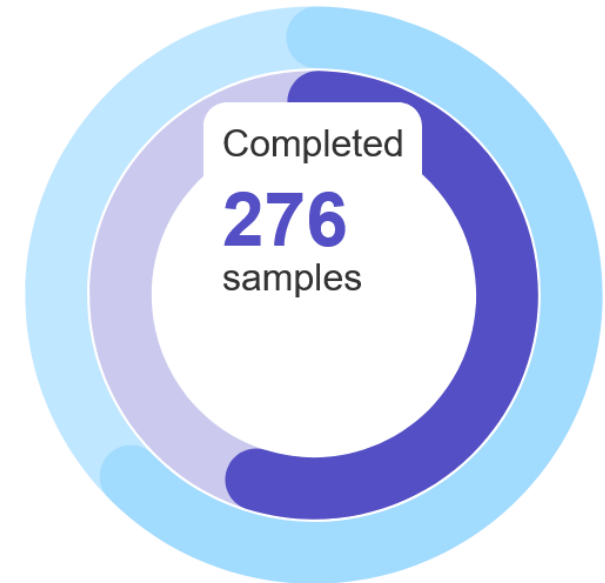
Test results from UNC Opioid Data Lab, analysis by UW ADAI

Recent Drug Checking Results

- Results shown here are from the most recent complete quarter.
- Data are based upon GCMS analyses conducted by UNC. Results can take several weeks.
- These are highly sensitive methods that can detect virtually any psychoactive drug at very low levels of concentration.
- Results are very incomplete for cuts/buffs/fillers.



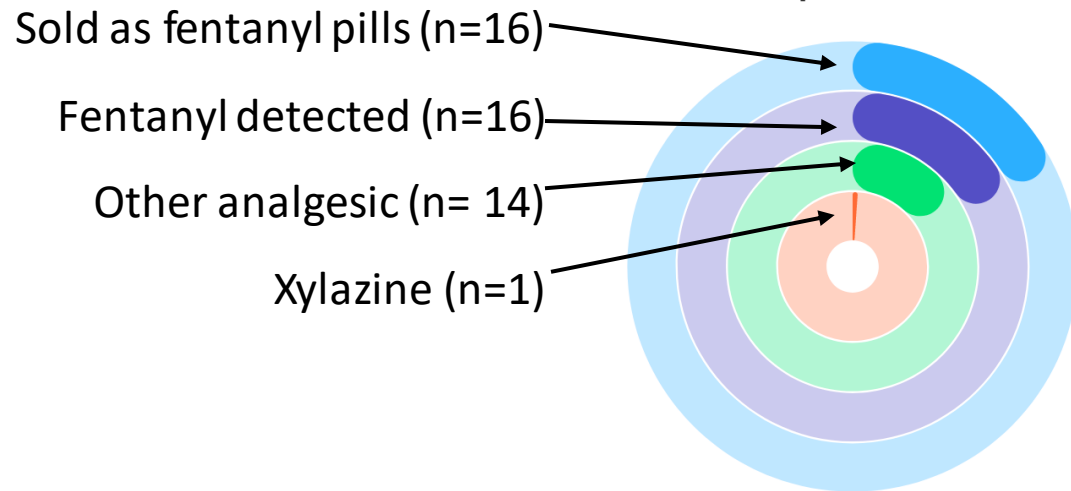
Samples submitted for confirmatory testing & completed in Washington, February-April 2024



Data from drug checking sites, analysis by UW ADAI

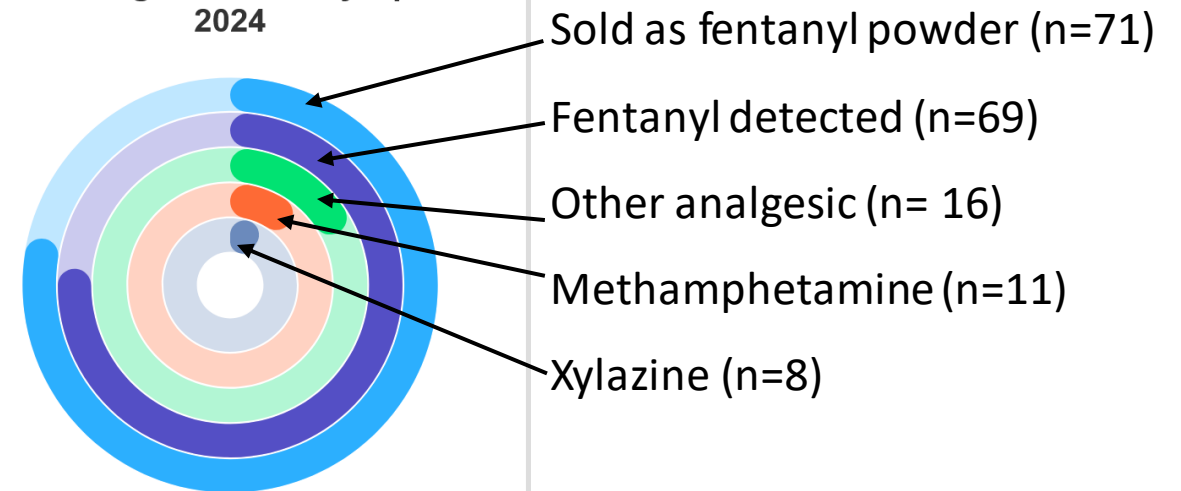
WA Drug Checking Results

≡ Substances found in "fentanyl pills" in Washington, February-April 2024



Data from drug checking sites, analysis by UW ADAI

≡ Substances found in "fentanyl powder" samples in Washington, February-April 2024



Data from drug checking sites, analysis by UW ADAI

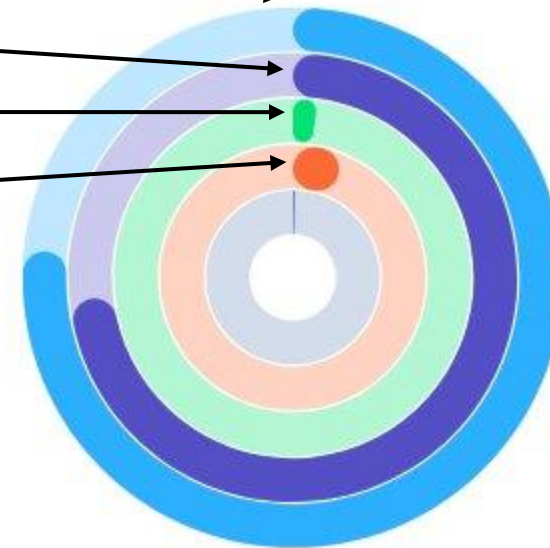
Data suggest

- Increasing frequency of fentanyl in powder form vs pill
- Other analgesic/acetaminophen usually in pill form, sometimes in powder
- Methamphetamine-context suggests cross-contamination vs purchase of a combined product
- Xylazine- more common in powder, but still a relatively small % of samples

WA Drug Checking Results

Sold as methamphetamine (n=69)
Methamphetamine detected (n=69)
Fentanyl (n= 2)
Methylsulfonylmethane "MSM" (n=6)

Substances found in
"methamphetamine" samples
in Washington, February-April
2024

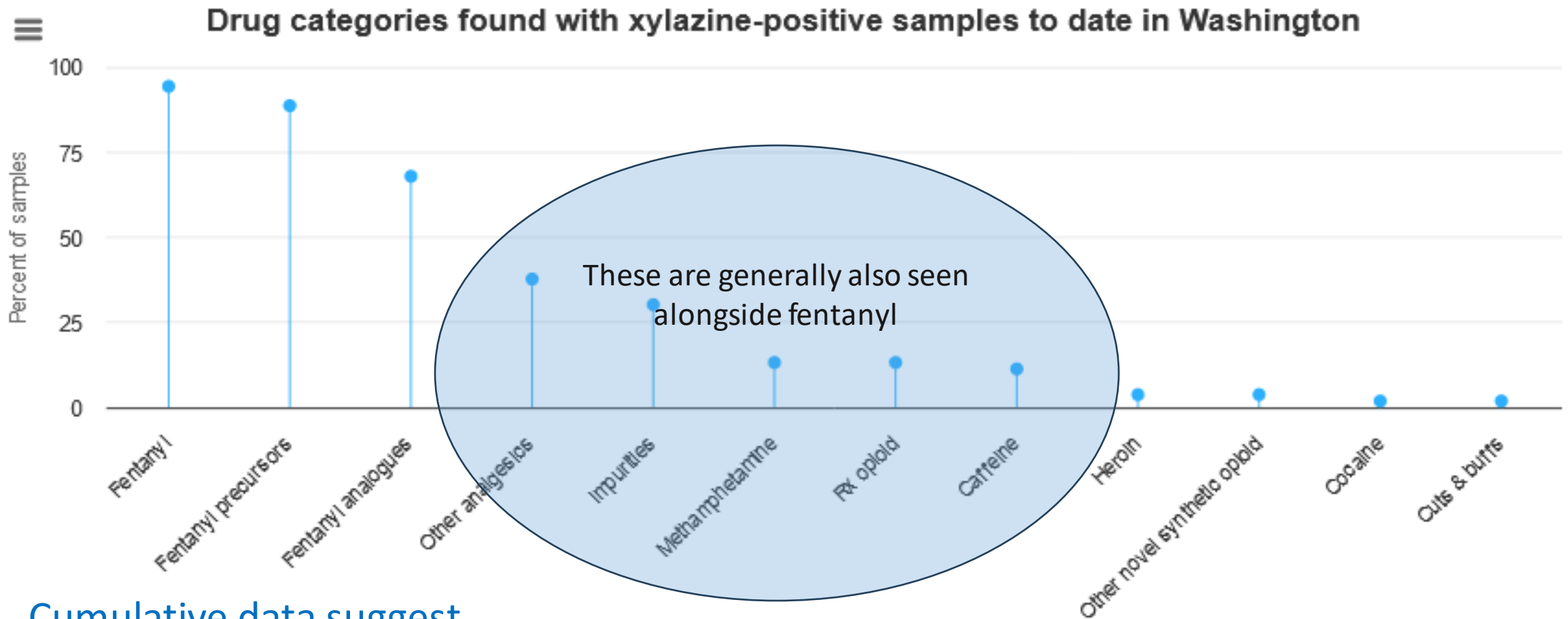


Data from drug checking sites. analysis by UW ADAI

Data suggest

- Drugs sold as meth typically contain meth
- Fentanyls are rarely detected
- Xylazine not detected in past quarter in samples sold as meth

WA Drug Checking Results



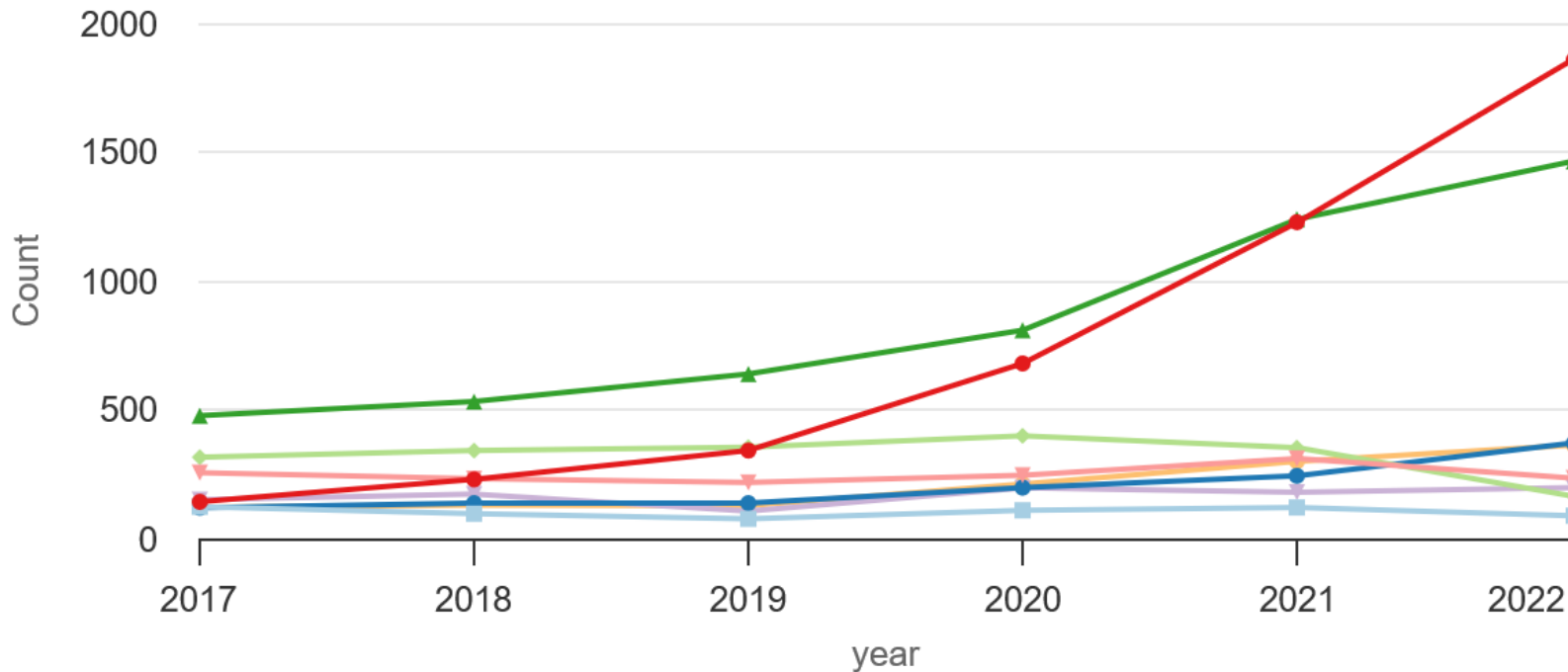
Test results from UNC Opioid Data Lab, analysis by UW ADAI

Cumulative data suggest

- Xylazine is almost exclusively seen in samples positive for fentanyl
- But, xylazine is **not** in most fentanyl samples (from previous slide)

Other drug data- Overdose deaths

Major drug deaths (count), statewide

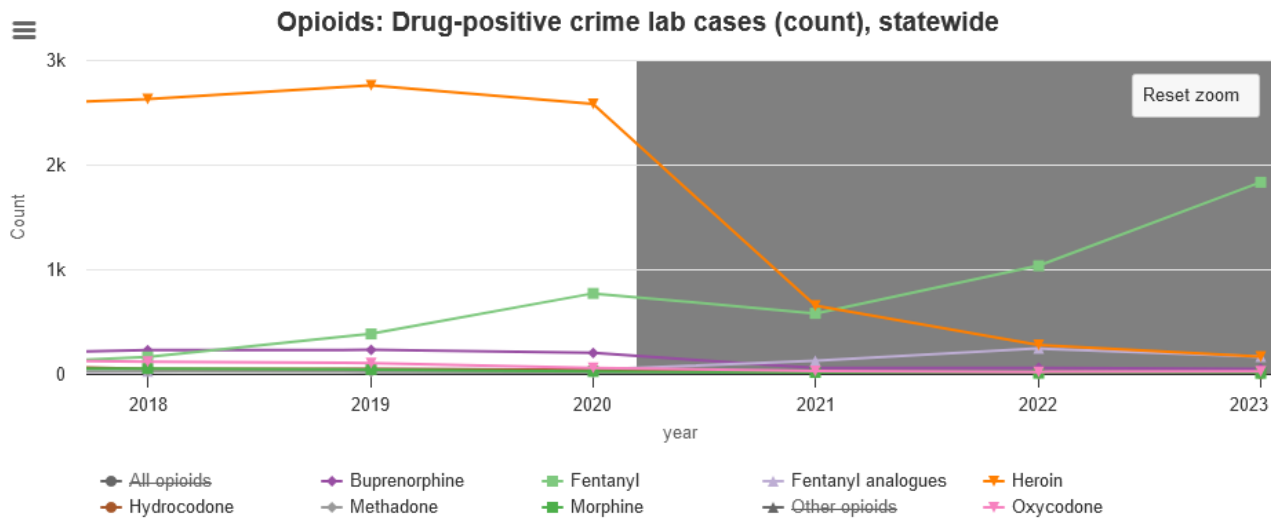
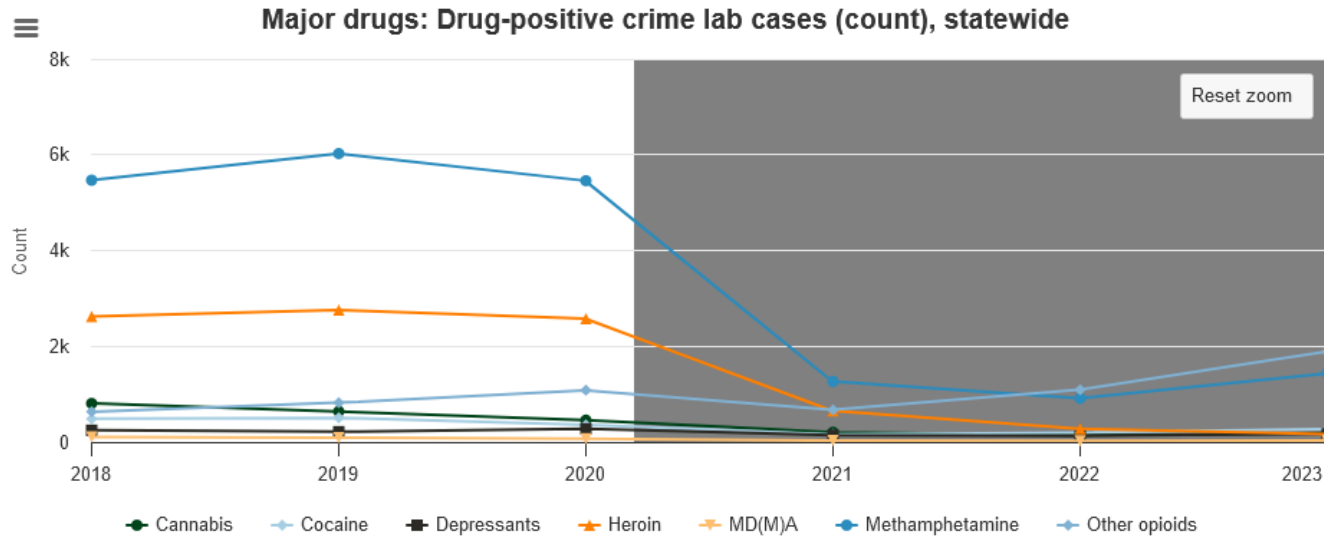


- Alcohol
- Barbiturates
- Heroin
- Other common op.
- All drug poisonings
- Benzodiazepines
- Methadone
- Other synthetic op.
- Antidepressants
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine

- Meth & Fentanyl similar to CDCN most common
- Death data, naturally, show more dangerous drugs- not a measure of prevalence

Analysis by UW ADAI. For data sources, see text or adai.uw.edu/WAdata

Other drug data- Police evidence



Data source: Forensic Laboratory Services Bureau, Washington State Patrol. 2021 counts and onward are impacted by the 2/25/2021 *Washington State v Blake* decision.

- Meth & Fentanyl similar to CDCN most common
- Rapid decline in heroin, mirroring increase in fentanyl- which preceded CDCN started
- Over representative of drug sales/distribution places, people, and modes intercepted by police e.g. "street" sales



Resources

Comment section Q&A

- **[“The Use and Impact of Community Drug Checking Services”](#)**
ADAI Report, November 2023
- **[Drug Checking Results in WA State](#)** Webpage describing results of CDCN
- **Washington State Community Drug Checking Network factsheets**
[General overview of drug checking project](#)
[Summary for drug checking participants](#)
- **Questions?** Email Ben Biamont, bbiamont@uw.edu