

Gabapentin Most Common Drug Detected at Glen Burnie Recovery House: “Gabapentin Is Replacing Opioids and Being Misused”

Submitting Site: Stepping Stones Recovery Houses
(Annapolis and Glen Burnie, Maryland)

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Background

Stepping Stones Recovery Houses is a sober living facility with houses throughout the State of Maryland. There are 27 houses for males and 8 houses for females. Residents of the houses come from many different programs, some of which include private treatment centers, drug court programs, public health departments, correctional facilities, and hospitals in Maryland and other states. Stepping Stones staff collect urines from residents weekly during their routine monitoring of house residents and screen for five drugs: benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and morphine.

Methods

Stepping Stones submitted 18 urine specimens from persons living in two recovery houses in Annapolis, Maryland, and 18 urine specimens from two houses in Glen Burnie, Maryland. All specimens were collected on one day in March 2019. See *DOTS Bulletin*, Issue 1, for a detailed description of the DOTS pilot study methodology and limitations (<https://go.umd.edu/ndews-dots>).

Sample Characteristics:

Glen Burnie, MD Sample: The 18 specimens came from persons aged 25 to 56 years old, with one-half younger than 37 years. Half (50%) came from males, and most were White (83%), while 17% were Black or African American.

Annapolis, MD Sample: The 18 specimens came from persons aged 25 to 56 years old, with one-half younger than 36 years. Half (50%) came from males and most were White (89%), while 11% were Black or African American.

DOTS Drug Test Results

Glen Burnie, MD Sample: The most frequently detected substance was gabapentin (n=7) followed by methadone (n=6) and buprenorphine (n=4). Antidepressants as a class were found in 12 specimens and antihistamines were found in 6 specimens. THC (marijuana) was detected in only 1 of the 18 specimens (see Table on page 2).

Annapolis, MD Sample: Two of the specimens from Annapolis had insufficient urine quantity for analysis and were therefore excluded from the Table on page 3. Methadone and buprenorphine were each detected in 2 of the 16 specimens. None of the specimens tested positive for marijuana and other drugs were rarely detected.

Implications

According to the Director of the Stepping Stones program, “It was very interesting to find the differences based on the location of Annapolis versus Glen Burnie. We were surprised to find that Glen Burnie had a much higher prevalence of drug and substance use than Annapolis, a larger city. In reviewing this, we speculated that Glen Burnie’s closer location to Baltimore led to the higher rate of use and type of substances. The study also confirmed what we thought specifically of the increasing prescription and use of gabapentin. We see that gabapentin is clearly the most popular drug prescribed and is replacing opioids and being misused.”

Editor’s Note: Extended urinalysis testing as part of another NDEWS-supported study of 51 stimulant users in Upstate New York also detected large percentages of gabapentin positives (McKnight, C. et al., *Stimulant and Opioid Use in Upstate NY: Findings from the 2018-2019 AIDS Institute SSP Evaluation*. Presented to the New York State Department of Health - Office of Drug User Health, New York, NY, November 6, 2019).

THE DRUG OUTBREAK TESTING SERVICE (DOTS) PILOT STUDY

DOTS tests up to 20 urine specimens for 240 drugs, without cost to the submitting site, to help identify emerging drugs for epidemiologic purposes.

For more information:
ndewsdots@umd.edu

DOTS Bulletins are available at: <https://go.umd.edu/ndews-dots>

Drugs or Drug Metabolites Detected by DOTS Laboratory Urinalyses

(N = 18 urine specimens submitted to DOTS by Stepping Stones Recovery Houses, Glen Burnie, Maryland)

| Specimen | Common Drugs | | Nonfentanyl Opioids | | Pharmaceutical Nonopioid Drugs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Other Drug | Total Detected | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------------------|------------|----------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|--|--|--|---|
| | THC (marijuana) | Benzoyllecgonine (cocaine) | Methadone/EDDP | Buprenorphine/Norbuprenorphine | Antihistamines | | | | Antidepressants | | | | | | Gabapentin | Naloxone | Cyclobenzaprine | Naltrexone | mCPP [^] | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Diphenhydramine | Cetirizine | Promethazine | Hydroxyzine | Amitriptyline | Citalopram | Bupropion | Sertraline | Fluoxetine | Trazodone [^] | | | | | | | Doxepin | | | | |
| G 1 | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | 6 |
| G 2 | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| G 3 | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | 5 |
| G 4 | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | 4 |
| G 5 | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | 4 |
| G 6 | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | 4 |
| G 7 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| G 8 | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | 3 |
| G 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | 3 |
| G 10 | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| G 11 | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | 3 |
| G 12 | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| G 13 | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| G 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| G 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| G 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | 1 |
| G 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| G 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Total Positive: | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |

[^]Trazodone is an antidepressant whose major active metabolite is mCPP. It is not possible to definitively determine whether the presence of mCPP was due to trazodone use or whether mCPP was taken on its own.

Note: Specimens were collected in March 2019 from two recovery houses in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

Source: Drug Outbreak Testing Service (DOTS), National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) Coordinating Center, Center for Substance Abuse Research, University of Maryland, College Park, December 2019.

Drugs or Drug Metabolites Detected by DOTS Laboratory Urinalyses

(N = 16* urine specimens submitted to DOTS by Stepping Stones Recovery Houses, Annapolis, Maryland)

| Specimen | Nonfentanyl Opioids | | | Pharmaceutical Nonopioid Drugs | | | | | | | | | | Other Drugs | | Total Detected | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| | Tramadol | Methadone/EDDP | Buprenorphine/Norbuprenorphine | Antihistamines | | | Antidepressants | | | | | Naltrexone | Naloxone | Gabapentin | mCPP [^] | | Phenmetrazine | | |
| | | | | Diphenhydramine | Cetirizine | Promethazine | Hydroxyzine | Citalopram | Trazodone [^] | Desvenlafaxine/Desmethylvenlafaxine | Venlafaxine | | | | | | | Amitriptyline | Bupropion |
| A 1 | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | 5 | |
| A 2 | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | 4 | |
| A 3 | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | 4 | |
| A 4 | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | 3 | |
| A 5 | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | 3 | |
| A 6 | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | 3 | |
| A 7 | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | 3 | |
| A 8 | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | 2 | |
| A 9 | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | 2 | |
| A 10 | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| A 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| A 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| A 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| A 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| A 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| A 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| Total Positive: | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | |

*18 urine specimens were submitted for testing, but only 16 specimens were testable due to insufficient volume.

[^]Trazodone is an antidepressant whose major active metabolite is mCPP. It is not possible to definitively determine whether the presence of mCPP was due to trazodone use or whether mCPP was taken on its own.

Notes: Specimens were collected in March 2019 from two recovery houses in Annapolis, Maryland.

Source: Drug Outbreak Testing Service (DOTS), National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) Coordinating Center, Center for Substance Abuse Research, University of Maryland, College Park, December 2019.