

Maryland Emergency Department Drug Surveillance System (EDDS) Update:

University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center (UM PGHC), June 2013 to June 2019

Cocaine Positives at New High, Marijuana Most Detected, Opiates Remain Low

Sample

Results for 1,297 emergency department (ED) patients from January 2019 to June 2019 have been added to the UM PGHC EDDS database, bringing the total to 15,208 drug positive specimens.

Results

Cocaine was found in 25% of the specimens from April-June 2019, the highest percentage of any quarter (Figure 1). However, marijuana remains the drug most often detected. Marijuana was found in 59% of specimens from April-June 2019 only slightly below its peak of 62% reached in October-December 2018. In contrast, opiate positives remain low, declining to 20% in April-June 2019, just above the low of 19% in April-June 2018. This decline must be interpreted with caution (see Implications below). Table 1 presents the results for all quarters and all drugs.

Implications

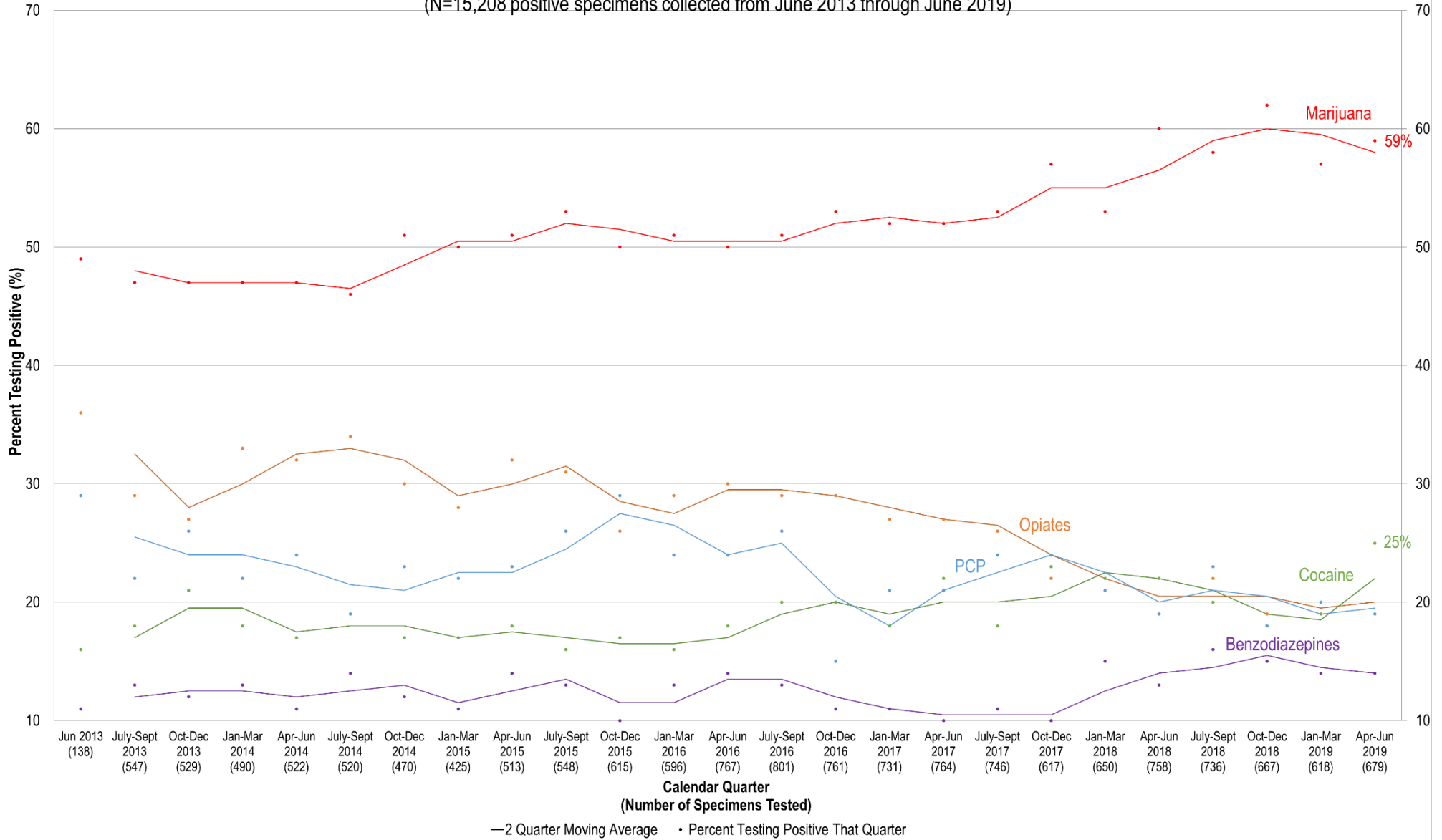
While cocaine reached a new high, it is still relatively low compared to marijuana. Marijuana remains at the highest level detected and may reflect the legalization of marijuana use in Washington, DC, and the availability of medical marijuana in Maryland. It is unknown how the patients' marijuana use may have been related to their ED admissions. The continuing decline of opiates is noteworthy, but the opiate screen used by this hospital primarily detects codeine and the heroin metabolite morphine, but not fentanyl or other synthetic opioids. A 2016 CESAR study of 106 suspected synthetic cannabinoid overdose ED patients also at UM PGHC showed only 4% testing positive for fentanyl or its analogs.¹

There are now 3 hospitals in Prince George's county participating in Maryland EDDS: UM PGHC, UM Bowie Health Center, and UM Laurel Medical Center. Two of the hospitals, UM PGHC (25%) and UM Bowie Health Center (18%), registered new highs in cocaine in April-June 2019. Marijuana was the drug most often detected in all three of the hospitals and opiate positives were well below their peaks. Trends in all drugs will continue to be monitored by Maryland EDDS.

¹Wish E.D., Billing A.S., Artigiani E.E., Dezman Z., Schwartz B., and Pueschel J. (2018). *Drug early warning from re-testing biological samples: Maryland hospital study*. Office of National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://ndews.umd.edu/resources/drug-early-warning-re-testing-biological-samples-maryland-hospital-study>.

**Figure 1: Drugs Detected in Positive Specimens from University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center
Emergency Department (ED) Patients, By Quarter**

(N=15,208 positive specimens collected from June 2013 through June 2019)



Note: Amphetamines, Barbiturates, and Methadone results not shown due to low percentage testing positive each quarter.

**Table 1: Drugs Detected in Positive Specimens from University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center
Emergency Department (ED) Patients, By Quarter**

(N=15,208 positive specimens collected from June 2013 through June 2019)

Quarter (N of specimens tested)	Marijuana %	Opiates %	PCP %	Cocaine %	Benzodiazepines %	Amphetamines %	Methadone %	Barbiturates %
June 2013 (138)	49	36 H	29 H	16 L	11	5	<1 L	<1
July-September 2013 (547)	47	29	22	18	13	2	3	1
October-December 2013 (529)	47	27	26	21	12	3	3	1
January-March 2014 (490)	47	33	22	18	13	3	2	2
April-June 2014 (522)	47	32	24	17	11	3	3	1
July-September 2014 (520)	46 L	34	19	19	14	3	3	3
October-December 2014 (470)	51	30	23	17	12	2 L	2	1
January-March 2015 (425)	50	28	22	17	11	5	3	2
April-June 2015 (513)	51	32	23	18	14	3	2	4 H
July-September 2015 (548)	53	31	26	16 L	13	4	4 H	2
October-December 2015 (615)	50	26	29	17	10	4	2	1
January-March 2016 (596)	51	29	24	16	13	4	2	2
April-June 2016 (767)	50	30	24	18	14	4	2	2
July-September 2016 (801)	51	29	26	20	13	4	3	2
October-December 2016 (761)	53	29	15 L	20	11	3	3	1
January-March 2017 (731)	52	27	21	18	11	5 H	3	1
April-June 2017 (764)	52	27	21	22	10 L	5	3	<1
July-September 2017 (746)	53	26	24	18	11	4	2	2
October-December 2017 (617)	57	22	24	23	10	2	3	<1
January-March 2018 (650)	53	22	21	22	15	4	2	<1
April-June 2018 (758)	60	19 L	19	22	13	4	2	1
July-September 2018 (736)	58	22	23	20	16 H	3	2	<1
October-December 2018 (667)	62 H	19	18	18	15	4	3	2
January-March 2019 (618)	57	20	20	19	14	4	1	1
April-June 2019 (679)	59	20	19	25 H	14	3	2	<1 L

Notes: H: Highest quarter. L: Lowest quarter.

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