

Methamphetamine, but No Fentanyl, Found in Opiate-Positive Specimens from a Corpus Christi, Texas, Residential Treatment Center; Multiple Drugs Found in Every Specimen

Submitting Site: Charlie's Place Recovery Center (Corpus Christi, Texas)

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Background

Charlie's Place Recovery Center is a residential substance use treatment center in Corpus Christi, Texas, that serves males and females ages 18 and older. For the last two years, heroin has become the most widely used drug treated for by this treatment center. Staff suspect that heroin may be cut with different substances, such as fentanyl, but they do not have the drug-testing capability to confirm this. DOTS was asked to analyze the urines of patients who screened positive for opiates and self-reported heroin use to determine the specific substances that were involved. Charlie's Place hoped that the results of the DOTS testing would provide insight into the substances being used by its patients and assist in its development of more effective protocols for future treatment.

Methods

Charlie's Place submitted ten urine specimens collected between December 2017 and January 2018 that had screened positive for opiates by their standard on-site, 5-drug panel dip test. Urine specimens are collected at admission as part of the patient's regular care, and screened for five drugs: opiates, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and benzodiazepines. 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

The ten opiate-positive specimens came from patients between the ages of 23 and 55 years old, with half being older than 33. Seven of the ten specimens came from males, and all were from persons identified as White. All patients had self-reported heroin use upon treatment admission.

DOTS Drug Test Results

As expected, at least one opioid was detected in all of the specimens; six specimens contained four or more opioids[^] (see table on page 2). However, none of the specimens contained fentanyl or fentanyl analogs. While 50% of the specimens were positive for amphetamine (a likely metabolite of methamphetamine), more than 60% were positive for methamphetamine. Because of the large number of specimens testing positive for methamphetamine, individual methamphetamine results are not provided in the drugs detected table to protect the identity of the persons who submitted specimens. Other drugs detected included marijuana (n=5) and cocaine (4). All specimens contained four or more drugs or drug metabolites.

Implications

Although these results suggest that patients who screen positive for opiates in this treatment program were not likely to be using fentanyl or heroin cut with fentanyl, the significant use of methamphetamine is noteworthy. Charlie's Place staff believe that the large number of methamphetamine positives may be due to the practice of speedballing (using an opiate and a stimulant at the same time), which is popular in their area. According to the site, these results will allow Charlie's Place to provide a more accurate heroin treatment protocol.

[^]The presence of some individual metabolites may be the result of the use of a single drug.

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.

To become a DOTS site or 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 = 10 opiate-positive urine specimens submitted to DOTS by Charlie's Place Recovery Center, Corpus Christi, Texas)

Specimen	Common Drugs				Nonfentanyl Opioids					Pharmaceutical Nonopioid Drugs				Other Drugs						
	Methamphetamine	Amphetamine	THC (marijuana)	Benzoyllecgonine (cocaine)	Morphine	Codeine	6-Acetylmorphine (heroin)	Hydromorphone	Noscapine	Tramadol	Anti-histamines		Benzo-diazepines		Dextromethorphan	Bufotenine	Synthetic Cannabinoids (SC)			
											Diphenhydramine	Promethazine	Alprazolam/α-Hydroxyalprazolam	7-Aminoclonazepam			5F-ADB (metab 7)	5F-AMB (metab 7)	FUB-PB-22 3CI	MDMB-FUBINACA (metab M1)
1	*		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓									✓	✓	✓	✓
2	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓							
3	*	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓							
4	*				✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓					
5	*	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓							✓					
6	*			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓												
7	*				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓										
8	*	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓												
9	*	✓			✓	✓		✓					✓							
10	*				✓	✓		✓	✓											
Total Positive:	*	5	5	4	10	9	3	9	5	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1

*To protect the identity of persons who submitted specimens, results are not provided for drugs that test positive by a high percentage of the specimens. However, since all the specimens submitted were opiate-positive, results are presented for morphine, codeine, and hydromorphone because these are included in the opiate screen used by Charlie's Place.

Note: Opiate-positive specimens were collected by Charlie's Place Recovery Center between December 2017 and January 2018.

Source: Drug Outbreak Testing Service (DOTS), National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) Coordinating Center, Center for Substance Abuse Research, University of Maryland, College Park, August 2018.