

Drug Checking in Vancouver Coastal Health

March 2019

This report summarizes key indicators for Fourier Transform Infrared (FT-IR)/fentanyl test strip combination drug checking done in Fraser Health in March 2019.

As the FT-IR spectrometer has a detection limit of 3-4% by weight (Sherman et al., 2018), unless otherwise stated, a drug check on any given sample consists of **both** Bruker ALPHA Fourier-Transform Infrared (FT-IR) spectrometer **and** BTNX fentanyl immunoassay test strip testing done in combination. When applicable, BTNX benzodiazepine or lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) immunoassay test strips are also used.

Please note that these data are not finalized and are subject to change.

Vancouver Coastal Health and the BCCSU gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following partners:

- Portland Hotel Society
 - Molson Overdose Prevention Site
 - SisterSpace
 - Overdose Prevention Society
 - Lookout Society
 - St. Paul's Overdose Prevention Site
 - Health Initiative for Men
- In March 2019, 356 drug checks were completed on samples in Vancouver Coastal Health
 - The majority of samples tested were expected by clients to be either opioids (208 or 58.4%), stimulants (68 or 19.1%), or psychedelics (44 or 12.4%)

Table 1. Number of drugs checks and hours at each respective site in VCH

Location	Number of Drug Checks	Hours
Insite	203	60
Molson OPS	58	17
Overdose Prevention Society	34	15
St. Paul's OPS	19	15
SisterSpace	6	4
Robert and Lily Lee Family CHC	32	12
Health Initiative for Men (HIM)	4	3
Total	356	126

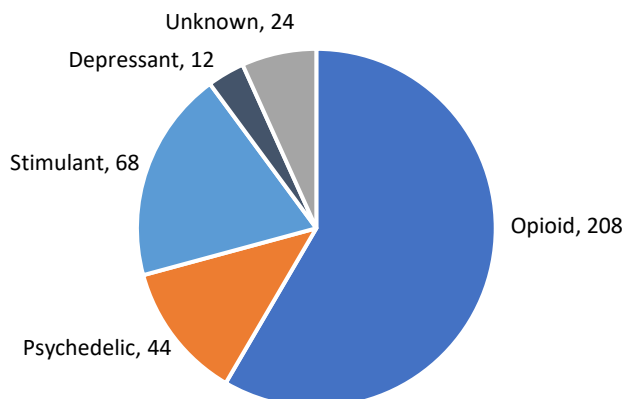


Figure 1. Number of drug checks performed in VCH in March 2019, by expected drug category

Depressant may include: benzodiazepines, GHB, zopiclone
Opioid may include: “down,” heroin, fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, pharmaceutical opioids
Polysubstance includes: cross-category mixtures
Psychedelic may include: 2C-family, tryptamines, ketamine, MDMA, LSD, cannabis
Stimulant may include: “speed”, crystal meth, cocaine, cathinones
Unknown includes: all samples in which the client could not identify the expected substance

Table 2. Number of samples that matched client expectation using FTIR/test strip drug checking in Vancouver Coastal Health in March 2019, by expected drug category

	Depressant	Opioid	Psychedelic	Stimulant	Other	Unknown	Total
True	11	181	40	67	0	0	299
False	1	27	4	1	0	0	33
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	24	23
Total	12	208	44	68	0	24	356

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents

Table 3. Number of opioid samples that matched client expectation using FTIR/test strip drug checking in Vancouver Coastal Health in March 2019, by expected drug

	Fentanyl	Heroin	Fentanyl & Heroin	Fentanyl analogue	Opium	Pharmaceutical	'Down'*	Total
True	148	10	13	0	1	0	9	181
False	14	7	4	0	0	1	1	27
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	162	17	17	0	1	1	10	208

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents

*'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount

- 127 opioid samples (61.1%) tested positive for fentanyl using the FT-IR spectrometer
- **The total fentanyl positivity rate in opioid samples was 86.1%**
- Of the 68 stimulant samples, 1 (1.5%) tested positive for fentanyl
- Of the 44 psychedelic samples, 0 (0.0%) tested positive for fentanyl

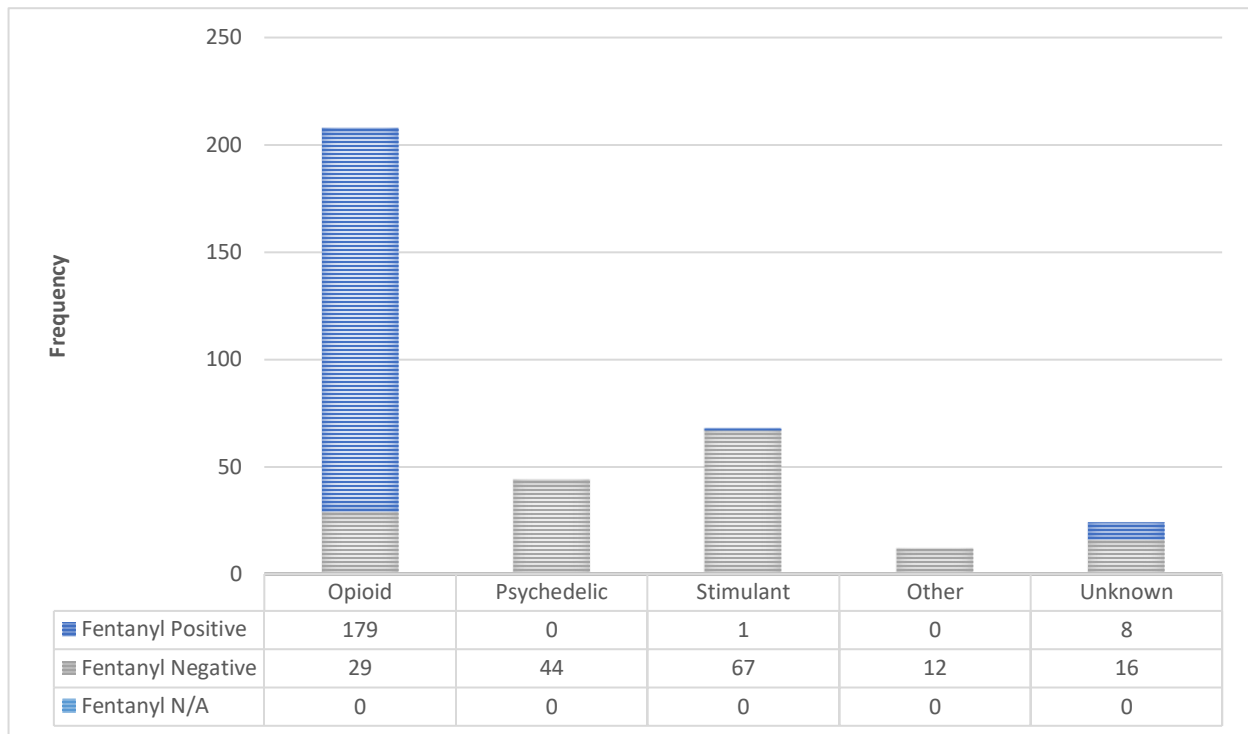


Figure 2. Number of drug checking samples that tested positive and negative for fentanyl in Vancouver Coastal Health, in March 2019, by expected drug category

Table 4. Public health notifications of drug checking results in VCH in March 2019

Date & Location	Expected Drug	FT-IR Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Lab Analysis	Outcome
1-Mar 2019 Vancouver	General alert	N/A	Negative	Carfentanil	RADAR alert
6-Mar 2019 Insite	Fentanyl	None (susp carfentanil)	Negative	Carfentanil	RADAR alert
15-Mar 2019 Insite	Crystal meth caused OD	Crystal meth and unknown	Negative	Crystal meth (pure)	RADAR alert
18-Mar 2019 Insite	Cocaine	Cocaine and fentanyl	Positive	Cocaine and fentanyl	RADAR alert

For more immediate notifications of concerning drug checking results, subscribe to VCH's Real-time Drug Alert and Response System (RADAR) by texting "alert" to (236) 999-DOPE (3673)

