

# Drug Checking in Vancouver Coastal Health

February 2019

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

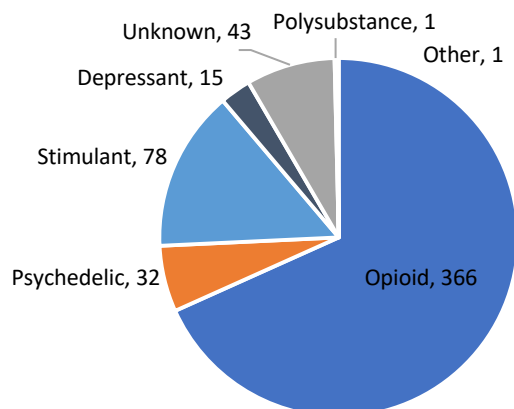
Vancouver Coastal Health and the BCCSU gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following partners:

- Portland Hotel Society
- Molson Overdose Prevention Site
- SisterSpace
- Overdose Prevention Society
- Lookout Society
- St. Paul's Overdose Prevention Site

- In February 2019, 536 drug checks were completed on samples in Vancouver Coastal Health
- The majority of samples tested were expected by clients to be either opioids (366 or 68.3%), stimulants (78 or 14.6%), or unknowns (43 or 8.0%).

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

Location	Number of Drug Checks	Hours
Insite	280	60
Molson OPS	164	30
Overdose Prevention Society	41	21
St. Paul's OPS	32	12
SisterSpace	4	6
Powell Street Getaway	2	5
Health Initiative for Men (HIM)	5	5
BCCSU Offices	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>141</b>



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

	Depressant	Opioid	Psychedelic	Stimulant	Other	Unknown	Total
True	12	330	21	78	1	0	442
False	3	34	8	0	1	0	46
N/A	0	2	3	0	0	43	48
Total	15	366	32	78	2	43	536

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

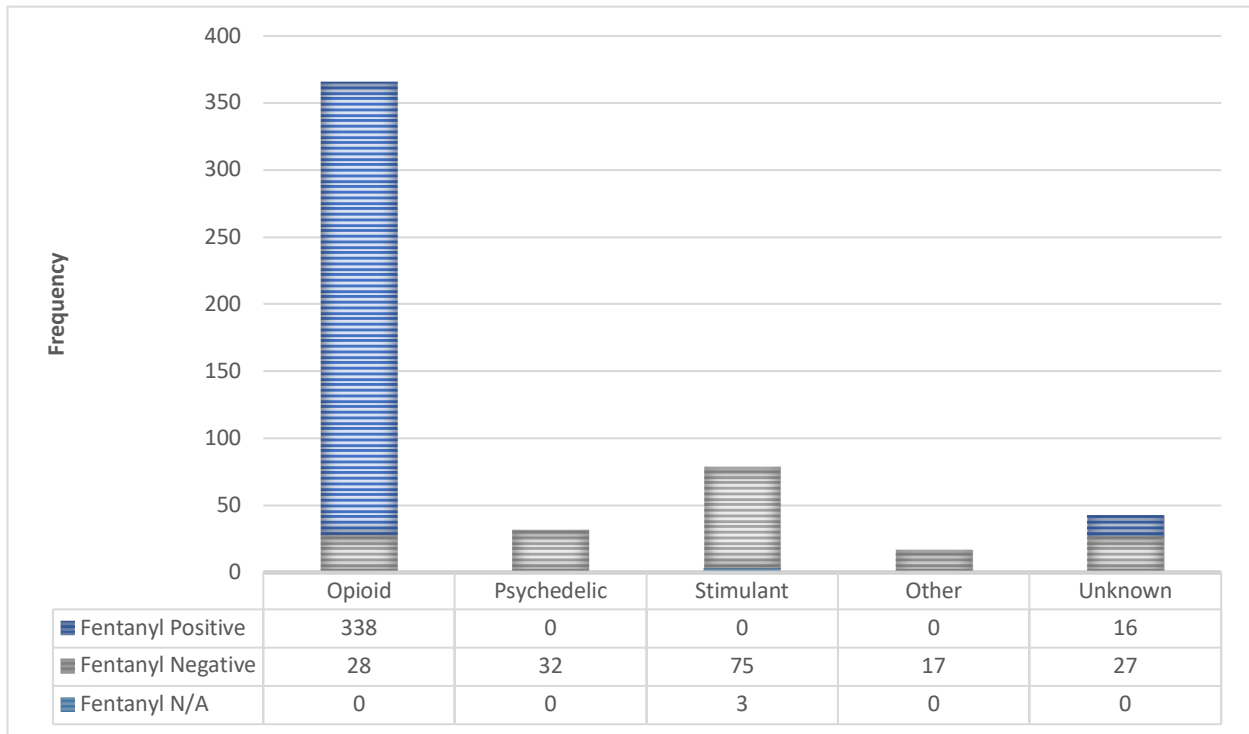
**Table 3.** Number of opioid samples that matched client expectation using FTIR/test strip drug checking in Vancouver Coastal Health in February 2019, by expected drug

	Fentanyl	Heroin	Fentanyl & Heroin	Fentanyl analogue	Pharmaceutical	‘Down’*	Total
True	232	16	14	3	1	64	330
False	7	12	7	0	1	7	34
N/A	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Total	239	29	21	3	2	72	366

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

- 226 opioid samples (61.7%) tested positive for fentanyl using the FT-IR spectrometer.
- **The total fentanyl positivity rate in opioid samples was 92.3%.**
- Of the 78 stimulant samples and 32 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 February 2019, by expected drug category

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

Date & Location	Expected Drug	FT-IR Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Lab Analysis	Outcome
8-Feb 2019 Vancouver	'Down'	AMB-FUBINACA	Positive	AMB-FUBINACA	RADAR alert
28-Feb 2019 Insite	'Down'	None	Negative	Carfentanil	RADAR alert
28-Feb 2019 Insite	'Down'	None	Positive	Etizolam	RADAR alert

