Situational Update on the Non-medical Use of Synthetic Opioids

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Regional Diversity of the Synthetic Opioids Issue

• Issue not limited to North America

• Fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, other pharmaceutical opioids
  ▪ North America
  ▪ Eastern, Western and Central Europe

• Tramadol
  ▪ West and North Africa
  ▪ Near and Middle East

➤ Complexity: regional differences, growing market integration, dynamic situation
Complexity of the Synthetic Opioids Issue

**Figure 3:** Variable dose of active substance in clandestinely manufactured pills

- **Tablet matrix**
- **Active substances**
- **Product for tableting**

Blending → Tablets with variable contents

Tablets with variable contents
Non-medical use of benzodiazepines: a growing threat to public health?

- Concomitant use of opioids and other drugs with depressant effects such as benzodiazepines
- Similar dynamics and challenges of benzodiazepines market (medical importance, NPS derivatives, ...)

Complexity of the Synthetic Opioids Issue
The global emergence of New Psychoactive Substances

Map: Number of NPS reported by countries, 2009-2018

Number of substances reported
- 301-387
- 201-300
- 101-200
- 51-100
- 11-50
- 1-10
- No data available

Persistence and change: Shift of the innovation dynamics of NPS towards opioids

Figure 2: Development of new fentanyl analogues by small changes in chemical structures. (A) fentanyl, (B) acetylfentanyl, (C) butyrfentanyl
High potential harm: emergence of NPS with opioid effects, 2012-2017

Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA) on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), June 2018. Data for 2017 are preliminary.
Substances under International Control

Fentanyl analogues reported to the UNODC Early Warning Advisory

- 1964: fentanyl
- 1980: sufentanil
- 1984: alfentanil
- 1988: remifentanil
- 1999: acetylfentanyl, octfentanil
- 2013: butyrfentanyl, furanyl fentanyl
- 2015: acetylfentanyl, octfentanil
- 2016: acetylfentanyl, para-fluoroisobutyrfentanyl

Fentanyl and analogues controlled under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
International Scheduling Decisions 2015 – 2018

Substances under International Control

- Dissociatives
- Opioids
- Sedative/hypnotics
- Hallucinogens
- Stimulants
- Cannabinoids

Legend:
- Blue: 2015
- Red: 2016
- Green: 2017
- Purple: 2018
Substances under International Control

- Classic hallucinogens: 6%
- Stimulants: 20%
- Dissociatives: 2%
- Synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists: 4%
- Sedatives/Hypnotics: 22%
- Opioids: 46%

Substances scheduled under the 1961 & 1971 Drug Conventions
UNODC’s Integrated and Multidisciplinary Approach

1. Early Warning and Trend Analysis
   Generating evidence in support of effective policy decisions and operational responses

2. Rationale Prescribing and Access to Opioids for Medical and Scientific Use
   Expand programmes with WHO and INCB on access to pain medication

3. Prevention and Treatment Programmes
   Strengthening and supporting prevention and treatment programmes related to opioids

4. International LE Operations to Disrupt Trafficking
   Enhancing operational activities to prevent diversion and trafficking of synthetic opioids

5. Strengthening National and International Counternarcotic Capacity
   Raising awareness, sharing best practices and promoting international cooperation
Thank you!

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