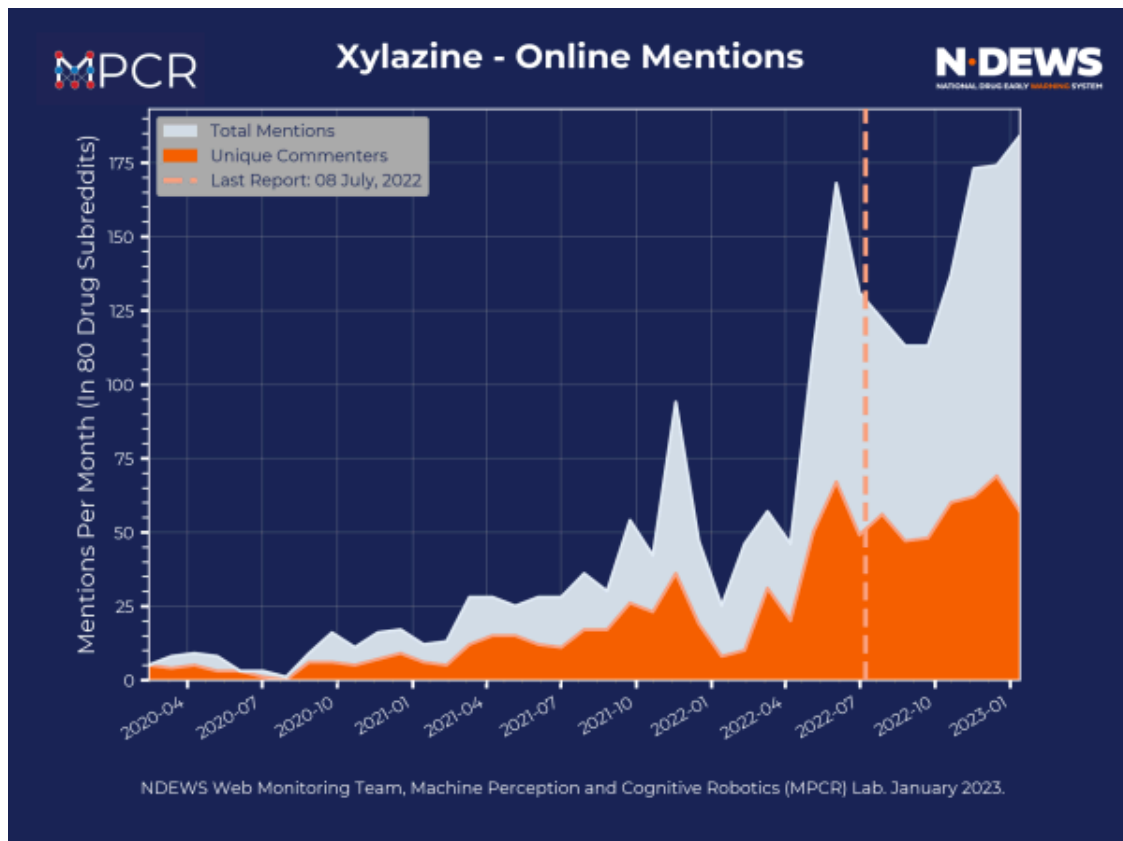


## Issue 117: January 27, 2023

NDEWS is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the University of Florida (U01DA051126, PI: Cottler)

## NDEWS SPOTLIGHT

## Report from the Web Monitoring Team: Online mentions of xylazine



**What was found?** A Subreddit discussion trend for xylazine, a sedative used in veterinary anesthesia, is reaching record highs. The last peak close to this size was in mid-2022.

**How is it being discussed?** Recent discussions of xylazine on Reddit primarily involve warnings of the drug as a common cutting agent in illicit fentanyl. The recent increase in online discussions of xylazine may also be due in part to increased media attention on its presence in the drug supply and its associated adverse effects.

**Drug Terms:** Xylazine, fentanyl.

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## Quotes from NDEWS Sentinel Site Directors regarding xylazine's impact in their area

**Minnesota:** “Through our [Minnesota Drug Overdose and Substance Use Surveillance Activity] MNDOSA system, which tests clinical specimens from participating hospitals, we have had several sample detections [of xylazine], with the number increasing in 2021 and 2022. The number of drug overdose deaths with xylazine involvement continues to increase. The number of deaths has increased from 4 in 2019 to 32 deaths through the third quarter of 2022. While some of this increase may be attributable to improved toxicology testing, xylazine involvement in drug overdose deaths continues to increase.

– Nate Wright, MPH, Epidemiologist Supervisor, Syndromic Surveillance & Drug Overdose Epidemiology Unit, Injury & Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, Duluth, MN. 1/18/2023.

**Chicago, IL:** “[As of January 1, 2023 there have been] 144 [xylazine-related] deaths in 2022 in Cook County (records for 2022 are not yet complete). Deaths were higher in the first half of 2022 (n=90) compared to the second half (n=54). Fentanyl was detected in all of these deaths.”

– Lawrence Ouellet, PhD, Research Professor Emeritus, Associate Director, Community Outreach Intervention Projects, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, University of Illinois Chicago.

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## "Tranq dope": Xylazine, an animal sedative mixed with fentanyl, brings unparalleled turmoil to US

A recent article from *The New York Times* warns of the veterinary tranquilizer xylazine, which has been increasingly detected as an adulterant in the illicit drug supply across the US. As the article reports, xylazine, also known as “tranq” and “tranq dope,” is being used to bulk up illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Its use has been associated with serious wounds, and because xylazine is not an opioid, standard opioid overdose reversal treatments may be less effective.

The drug currently exists in a "legal gray zone" and is not listed as a controlled substance. [Read the article here.](#)

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## Widespread distribution of xylazine detected throughout the US in patient samples collected in healthcare settings

In a study published January 6th in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, samples collected from patients in various outpatient healthcare settings were analyzed for the presence of xylazine. Out of the 39 states that ordered xylazine testing, 25 states reported xylazine-positive samples. Of the samples that were positive for xylazine, fentanyl, buprenorphine, nicotine, cocaine, naloxone, D-methamphetamine, and delta-9-THC were also detected. The authors note the prevalence of xylazine has spread geographically throughout the US and is indicative of the wide incorporation into the illicit drug supply. [Read the study here.](#)

[Share your thoughts on this topic here](#)



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## DEA: The growing threat of xylazine

A Joint Intelligence Report from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) details the presence and dangers of xylazine in an increasing number of illicit drug mixtures and overdose deaths. The report provides an overview of xylazine, including its adverse effects, signs of overdose, and an outlook for its future in the US. [Read the report here.](#)

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## Xylazine test strips for use in drug checking

The Center for Forensic Science Research and Education (CFSRE) released a new report on the effectiveness of xylazine test strips for use in drug checking. From their research, the minimum concentration of xylazine needed for a positive detection was 650 ng/mL when dissolved in water. In a test with 25 drug samples, 20 samples contained xylazine, and all 20 samples containing xylazine produced positive responses on the xylazine test strips. The authors concluded that the xylazine test strips can reliably produce presumptive results of the presence of xylazine in drug samples. [Read the report here.](#)

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## Xylazine found to complicate opioid intoxication in children

In a study recently published in *Pediatrics*, the authors presented three cases of synthetic opioid intoxication complicated by the concomitant presence of xylazine. Three exposed children presented with severe signs and symptoms, two of whom experienced cardiac arrest. Xylazine was detected in urine studies only through the use of specialized toxicology testing. The authors note that xylazine is likely underreported due to variability in testing and awareness it has been ingested. [Read the study here.](#)

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## PAPERS SUGGESTED BY OUR READERS

• **'We don't live in a harm reduction world, we live in a prohibition world': tensions arising in the design of drug alerts**

Isabelle Volpe, Rita Brien, Jasmin Grigg, Stephanie Tzanetis, Sione Crawford, Tom Lyons, Nicole Lee, Ginny McKinnon, Caitlin Hughes, Alan Eade, & Monica J. Barratt. *Harm Reduction Journal*; January 9, 2023.

[Read the study here.](#)

## UPCOMING WEBINARS



Our Community. Our Health.

Town Hall

# MEDICAL MARIJUANA AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Monday, January 30th, 2023: 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM EST

Please join us for an informative and interactive town hall on Medical Marijuana, moderated by Dr. PeDro Cohen. We will address any questions you may have in our Q&A session at the end of the town hall.

Join the conversation with #OCOH (Zoom link below)



Irvin PeDro Cohen  
ED, MBA



Robert L. Cook  
MD, MPH



Bertha Madras  
PhD



LaTrice Montgomery  
PhD



MMERI Team

[bit.ly/3J1nstS](https://bit.ly/3J1nstS)



• **UF HealthStreet Our Community, Our Health: Medical marijuana and public health**

**Moderator:** Irvine PeDro Cohen, ED, MBA

**Speakers:**

Robert L. Cook, MD MPH

Bertha Madras, PhD

LaTrice Montgomery, PhD

Florida A&M's Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative Team

**Date:** Monday, January 30, 2023

**Time:** 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. EST

[Zoom link.](#)

• **NMS Labs: Tolerant or intolerant? Learning from studying drug concentrations in the living and the dead**

**Speaker:** NMS Labs Director of Toxicological Services, Laura M. Labay, Ph.D., F-ABFT, DABCC-TC

**Date:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023

**Time:** 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. EST

[Register here.](#)

**N·DEWS**

NATIONAL DRUG EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

**RAPID STREET REPORTING (RSR)**

**STUDENT  
VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED!**



**WE NEED YOUR HELP  
COLLECTING DATA!**

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You will:

- Conduct primary data collection on substance use
- Travel to major U.S. cities once per year, for one weekend
- Receive up to **\$20/per hour**
- Receive reimbursed travel, lodging, and food
- Work requirements per site: 26 hours of data collection. Travel/work Friday-Sunday
- Eligibility: At least 21 years old, have a bachelor's degree, have experience interviewing, be in good academic standing, and receive written approval from mentor

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