Sentinel Site Report - July 2026

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Every month we ask the Sentinel Site Directors about a new trend that they are observing. Earlier this year, alerts were issued regarding the emergence of a class of synthetic opioids known as benzimidazol-2-ones, or "orphines," including the April 2026 Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Drug Threat Notice on cychlorphine and a subsequent May 2026 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In response to these alerts, this month's report focuses on orphines.

The ONDCP alert noted that although orphines have not been identified in every state, they have been detected across all four US regions, with the greatest prevalence in Ohio, Texas, and Tennessee. The alert also highlighted that cychlorphine is not detected by drug checking test strips or in routine hospital urine screens for opioids. At present, the national signal for NDEWS from Sentinel Site Directors appears limited. However, this may reflect sparse monitoring and testing for these emerging synthetic opioids. monitoring and testing for these emerging synthetic opioids. In the meantime, we are reporting additional insights on other drugs as well.

Note: Some data are preliminary, and the type of indicators also varies by site, hence reporting differences. Lack of information about a particular drug from a site director does not indicate lack of availability. While trends observed may not be representative of broader trends within the US, responses provide insight of local context for changes in substance use and overdose patterns.

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West Region

San Fransicsco, CA: Phillip Coffin, MD, MIA

Cyclorphine has been seen in overdose deaths, but the number is low. It has been seen in fentanyl and counterfeit pill deaths.

As of June 2026, 262 people died of drug-related acute toxicity, with fentanyl dominating (n=181). Methamphetamine and cocaine are also involved in the majority of deaths; other substances are rare.

San Diego, CA: Annick Bórquez, PhD

No drug-related deaths have involved orphines and orphines have not been detected in the street drug supply using FTIR and NIST confirmatory testing.

Nitazene not detected in drug checking yet, but two deaths involved N-pyrrolidino protonitazene only (5/2025) and N-pyrrolidino protonitazene, citalopram, and trazodone (02/2026).

The drug checking program has detected medetomidine found in two fentanyl samples. No deaths involved medetomidine yet.

Arizona: Steven Dudley, PharmD, DABAT

Nothing to report on orphines at this time.

Most medical examiner offices contacted do not screen for nitazenes due to cost barriers. From poison center data, we have not seen any evidence but few hospitals/providers are willing to do a comprehensive drug screen specifically looking for it if it will not affect patient management.

Denver, CO: Alexandra Tillman, MS

Nothing to report on orphines at this time.

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Midwest Region

Minnesota: Deepa McGriff, MPH

Through drug product testing, the Minnesota Public Health Lab identified one sample with spirochlorphine in 2026. To date, no orphines have been detected in post-mortem toxicology.

Nebraska: Patrick Habecker, PhD

There have not been any discussion of orphines and there is no evidence showing presence of orphines at this time.

Recent reports show a decrease in fentanyl contamination and fewer overdoses were reported in the past 6 months.

St. Louis, MO: Heidi Israel, PhD, FNP, LCSW, CCRG

MO has issued a warning on cyclorphine.

Nitazenes are found at low levels (0-15%). Xylazine and medetomidine were identified in 1 out of 46 ME deaths. Methamphetamine and cocaine are found with fentanyl and heroin in many samples and ME data.

MO has successfully cracked down on unlicenced shops that sell unregulated intoxicating hemp, synthetic cannabinoids, and kratom products. Continued mixed substances in drug testing and ME reports - fentanyl with heroin is noted along with methamphetamine and cocaine. There were low levels of xylazine and medetomidine detected. The local Poison Center is attributing the diphenhydramine spike to the “Benadryl Challenge” on social media among adolescents age 13-19.

Chicago, IL: Mary Mackesy-Amiti, PhD

Cychlorphine (N-propionitrile chlorphine) was identified in 6 decedents by toxicological analysis from January to June 2026. Other substances found in combination included benzodiazepines (bromazolam, etizolam, alprazolam, flubromazepam), opioids (oxycodone, oxymorphone), gabapentin, trazodone, and hydroxyzine. From community drug checking, 2 drug samples tested positive for cychlorphine and 3 samples tested positive for spirochlorphine.

17% of samples sold as “dope” in 2026 tested positive for nitazenes, only slightly less than 22% found in 2025. The prevalence of nitazenes in fatal opioid overdoses was also lower (5.6% vs. 6.9%) but higher than in 2024 (3.7%).

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Midwest Region (cont.)

Ohio: Kelley Kampman, PhD

There is an increased presence of orphines, but overall availability remains low based on state forensic labs and drug seizure data. From January to July 2026, 19 samples were identified vs 32 samples in 2025. Orphines have been identified with cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, alprazolam, and carfentanil. The majority of lab encounters are with N-propionitrile chlorphine, spirochlorphine and spirobrorphine.

From January to June 2026 there was a 67% decrease in nitazene detections compared to the previous six months.

South Region

Texas: Dayong Lee, PhD

11 cases with N-propionitrile chlorphine were identified from October 2025 to April 2026. Dallas County reported multiple N-propionitrile chlorphine cases in its Seized Drugs lab but none in Toxicology. These drugs are mostly seen in Dallas and Houston areas but not in San Antonio yet.

Baltimore & DC: Agnes Winokur, PhD

There have been no reports of orphines in the illicit drug supply in DC, MD, or VA. Only 3 exhibits of nitazenes in VA have been reported in the illicit drug supply in 2026 (N-pyrrolidino isotonitazene).

In the last 90 days, the top trending substance is MDMB-4en-PINACA (16% of substances) followed by medetomidine (11%), and carfentanil (9%) of samples reported (DEA data). Substances seen with carfentanil include fentanyl, methamphetamine, xylazine, caffeine, quinine, medetomidine, BTMPS, and lidocaine. Ketamine is the 8th most commonly detected substance in Maryland and it is mainly seen with caffeine, fentanyl, acetaminophen, and BTMPS. Xylazine decreased to 17% in Q2 2026 from 21% in Q1.

Overdoses in MD - at least 15 overdoses in correctional facilities (since August 2025) involving synthetic cannabinoids sprayed on paper, (5F-MDMB-PINACA and MDMB-4en-PINACA). Also, OCME reported 23 fatal drug poisonings involving o-Methyl Fentanyl in 2026 vs none in 2025. NFLIS query showed only 8 reports of o-Methyl Fentanyl in 2024 in (DC and MD) and then an increase to 32 reports in 2025. So far in 2026 NFLIS shows o-Methyl Fentanyl reported 8 times.

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South Region (cont.)

Kentucky: Sarah Hargrove, MS

Cychlorphine was identified in early January 2026 via used syringe residue testing. The forensic toxicology laboratory officially added an orphine panel as of April 2026. This panel includes the following orphines: 5,6-dichloro brorphine, 5,6-dichloro desmethylchlorphine, brorphine, chlorphine, N-propionitrile chlorphine (cychlorphine), spirobrorphine, spirochlorphine. Fatal drug overdoses with any orphine have yet to be identified.

Atlanta, GA: Matt Meyers, MS, MPS

There have not been any findings for orphines or nitazenes in the past 3 months.

Fentanyl continues to dominate - trailing methamphetamine, cocaine, and cannabis products in seized drugs. Novel opioids are far less commonly detected than fentanyl, oxycodone, and hydrocodone.

Florida: Bruce Goldberger, PhD

Orphine derivatives have not been identified and the prevalence of nitazenes and related analogues is declining.

Toxicology laboratory directors continue to report significant decreases in novel benzodiazepines, synthetic cathinones, illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF), fentanyl analogs, and nitazenes. Cocaine, fentanyl, and methamphetamine remain detected. No -orphine derivatives have been identified to date. Other NPS and emerging drugs identified in casework include acetylfentanyl, α-PiHPP (iso-PV8), bromazolam, carfentanil, ethylbromazolam, fluorofentanyl, ketamine, 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), ortho-methylfentanyl, phenazolam, and synthetic cannabinoids. Adulterants in decedents include levamisole, medetomidine, and xylazine.

Northeast Region

Philadelphia, PA: Jeanmaire Perrone, PhD

Nothing to report on orphines at this time.

New York City, NY: Ellenie Tuazon, MPH

Nothing to report on orphines at this time.