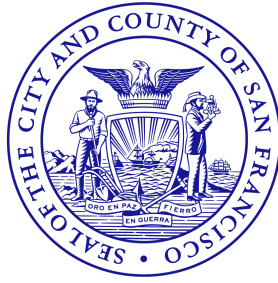


City and County
of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors
Member, District 6

MATT DORSEY

麥德誠

NEWS RELEASE

National health warning over Medetomidine's role in overdose spikes triggers inquiry from Sup. Dorsey

Powerful veterinary tranquilizer — emerging as a deadly new adulterant in the drug supplies of U.S. and Canadian cities — caused 160 hospitalizations in Philadelphia

SAN FRANCISCO (May 28, 2024) — A nationwide public health advisory that last week warned of a potent veterinary sedative's role in driving recent drug overdose spikes in several North American cities is prompting a formal inquiry from San Francisco Supervisor Matt Dorsey.

In his [Letter of Inquiry](#) issued today, Dorsey is seeking responses from San Francisco's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Department of Public Health, and the Police Department's Drug Market Agency Coordination Center on whether the City's street-level drug supply is being monitored closely enough for the presence of Medetomidine. The Center for Forensic Science Research & Education and NPS Discovery's May 20, 2024 public alert blamed Medetomidine for "recent mass overdose outbreaks in Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere," including the Canadian metropolitan areas of Toronto and Vancouver.

According to a [National Public Radio News report last Friday](#), Philadelphia reported "160 hospitalizations over a three- or four-day period" involving Medetomidine, which as a fentanyl adulterant can slow heart rates to dangerous and even deadly levels.

Dorsey is also asking relevant departments to report back with guidance on how city leaders can adequately fund and best support ongoing monitoring for Medetomidine and other dangerous and deadly adulterants in San Francisco's illicit drug supply.

Today's letter builds on Supervisor Dorsey's previous letter of inquiry in February 2023, in which he advocated for expanded monitoring for Xylazine, another dangerous veterinary tranquilizer known to adulterate fentanyl and other street-level opioids.

"As with my prior inquiry, my purpose is to ascertain how I may knowledgeably champion work I consider essential to protect the life and health of San Franciscans struggling with addiction," wrote Dorsey, "and to sustain the indications of progress we're beginning to see in the deadly drug overdose crisis facing San Francisco."

Dorsey has publicly acknowledged his own journey in recovery from drug addiction as the motivating factor that led him to seek a Board of Supervisors seat in 2022.

#

For immediate release:

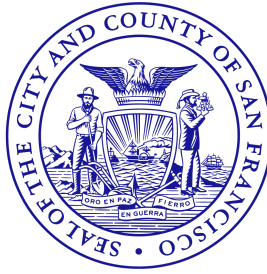
May 28, 2024

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of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors
Member, District 6

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May 28, 2024

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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
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Emailed to: Angela.Cavillo@sfgov.org

LOI: Monitoring San Francisco's illicit drug supply for Medetomidine, an adulterant reportedly now driving 'recent mass overdose outbreaks' in U.S. and Canadian cities

Dear Madam Clerk,

Last week, the Center for Forensic Science Research & Education and NPS Discovery issued a public alert "to notify public health, harm reduction, first responders, clinicians, medical examiners and coroners, forensic and clinical laboratories, and all other related communities about new information surrounding the emergent adulterant medetomidine,"¹ and I write this Letter of Inquiry (LOI) in accordance with Charter § 16.114 to explore its implications locally.

Medetomidine's appearance in street-level recreational drug supplies — usually as an adulterant to fentanyl or other opioids — is reportedly now driving "recent mass overdose outbreaks in Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere," including the Canadian cities of Toronto

¹ "Medetomidine Rapidly Proliferating Across USA — Implicated In Recreational Opioid Drug Supply & Causing Overdose Outbreaks," The Center for Forensic Science Research & Education and NPS Discovery, May 20, 2024, https://www.cfsre.org/images/content/reports/public_alerts/Public_Alert_Medetomidine_052024.pdf.

LOI: Monitoring San Francisco's illicit drug supply for Medetomidine, an adulterant reportedly now driving 'recent mass overdose outbreaks' in U.S. and Canadian cities

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and Vancouver. In this LOI, I request responses from relevant city agencies to the following questions:

- **Current practices.** Is San Francisco's illicit drug supply being monitored for Medetomidine currently, whether in street-level drug seizures, decedent toxicology panels, or elsewhere?
- **Prospective best practices.** To the extent that current monitoring is insufficient, how may the Board of Supervisors fund and best support monitoring for Medetomidine and other dangerous and deadly adulterants in San Francisco's illicit drug supply?

Please know this letter is motivated by concerns similar to those I expressed in my LOI of February 7, 2023,² in which I sought information on monitoring for Xylazine and novel synthetic opioids emerging in the drug supply last year. As with my prior inquiry, my purpose is to ascertain how I may knowledgeably champion work I consider essential to protect the life and health of San Franciscans struggling with addiction, and to sustain the indications of progress we're beginning to see³ in the deadly drug overdose crisis facing San Francisco.

Thank you for your attention to this inquiry. Should you have questions or require more clarity, you may contact me or my aide, Mahanaz Ebadi, at Mahanaz.Ebadi@sfgov.org.

Best,



MATT DORSEY

² "Letter of Inquiry: Monitoring for novel synthetic opioids and other drugs of abuse that cause accidental drug overdose deaths in the City and County of San Francisco," from Supervisor Matt Dorsey, February 7, 2023, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:394960db-6bcc-429f-881d-48cd0f57784d>.

³ "SF overdose deaths decline amid new push to expand treatment access" by Natalia Gurevich, *San Francisco Examiner*, May 22, 2024, https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/health/sf-drug-overdose-deaths-drop-amid-expanded-treatment-push/article_8f98361e-1875-11ef-a33b-af284b565f36.html.

LOI: Monitoring San Francisco's illicit drug supply for Medetomidine, an adulterant reportedly now driving 'recent mass overdose outbreaks' in U.S. and Canadian cities

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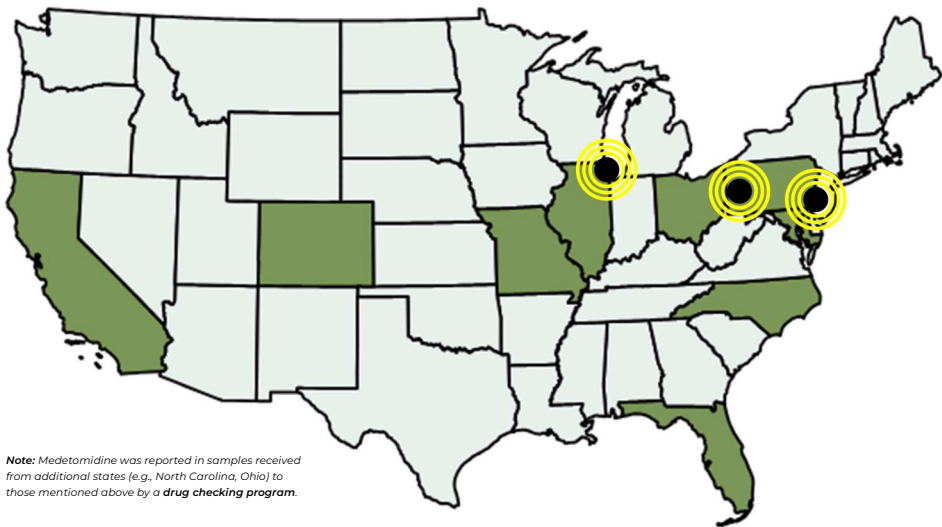
MEDETOMIDINE RAPIDLY PROLIFERATING ACROSS USA — IMPLICATED IN RECREATIONAL OPIOID DRUG SUPPLY & CAUSING OVERDOSE OUTBREAKS

PURPOSE: The objective of this announcement is to notify public health, harm reduction, first responders, clinicians, medical examiners and coroners, forensic and clinical laboratories, and all other related communities about new information surrounding the emergent adulterant **medetomidine** (also referred to as dexmedetomidine).

BACKGROUND: Medetomidine is an alpha-2 agonist, belonging to the same family of drugs as xylazine and clonidine. Medetomidine is synthetically manufactured and exists in two enantiomeric forms: **dexmedetomidine** and levomedetomidine, the former being active and potent. Dexmedetomidine is approved for use in humans and is administered in hospital, while differing forms of medetomidine are available for use in veterinary medicine. The effects of **medetomidine** can include sedation, analgesia, muscle relaxation, anxiolysis, bradycardia, hypotension, hyperglycemia, and hallucinations. Duration of action is noted to be longer for medetomidine relative to xylazine.

SUMMARY: Medetomidine is the latest CNS depressant to appear as an adulterant alongside fentanyl in the recreational drug supply. Recent mass overdose outbreaks in Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere have all been associated with fentanyl or heroin drug products containing medetomidine, as well xylazine and/or other substances. In cases where medetomidine ingestion is suspected or confirmed, severe adverse effects have been noted, including **heightened sedation and profound bradycardia**. In December 2023, the CFSRE and the Colombo Plan issued a **Toxic Adulterant Alert** for medetomidine following its emergence in the recreational drug supply.

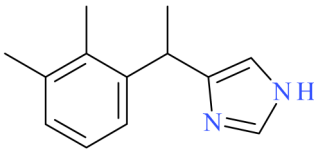
TIMEFRAME	DESCRIPTION OF MEDETOMIDINE IDENTIFICATIONS AND OVERDOSE EVENTS
Late 2022	Medetomidine begins appearing more regularly in the Maryland drug supply, following its first detection in July 2022. Medetomidine is commonly identified alongside fentanyl, xylazine, and other substances.
Mid-to-Late 2023	Medetomidine is sporadically identified in toxicology specimens collected from patients presenting to emergency departments after suspected opioid overdose (confirmed to not be administered). Overdose events originated from Missouri, Colorado, Pennsylvania, California, and Maryland . Medetomidine is commonly detected with fentanyl.
January 2024	An alert is issued out of Toronto, ON , about the emergence of medetomidine in the drug supply. This is followed by increased positivity in subsequent weeks and months, as medetomidine is found alongside fentanyl in suspected opioid products and commonly in combination with xylazine and other substances.
Early 2024	Medetomidine detections increase in drug materials and toxicology specimens originating from western Canada, including Vancouver, BC , commonly alongside fentanyl and other opioids.
Late April 2024	Medetomidine first appears in drug products in Philadelphia, PA , causing a large scale outbreak of overdoses and adverse events. Medetomidine is identified alongside fentanyl and xylazine.
Early May 2024	Medetomidine first appears in a drug product in Pittsburgh, PA , associated with overdoses and adverse events. Medetomidine is identified alongside fentanyl and xylazine.
Early May 2024	Medetomidine first appears in drug products in Chicago, IL , causing a large scale outbreak of overdoses and adverse events. Medetomidine is identified alongside fentanyl and xylazine, or alongside heroin without xylazine.



*Note: Medetomidine was reported in samples received from additional states (e.g., North Carolina, Ohio) to those mentioned above by a **drug checking program**.*

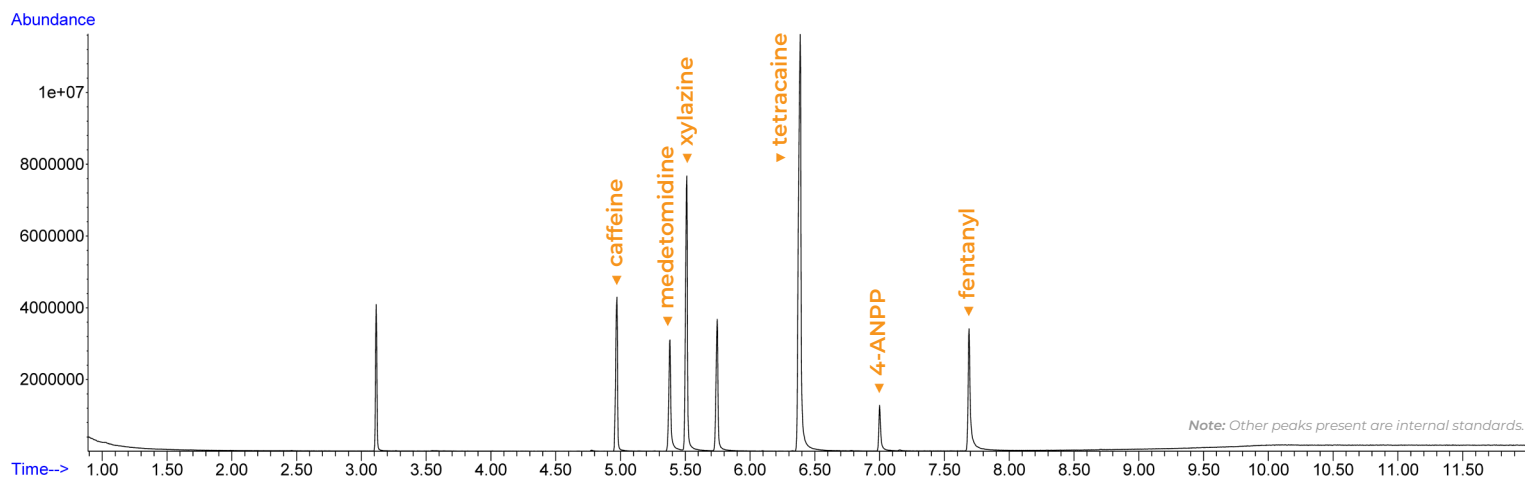
◀ GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF MEDETOMIDINE EMERGENCE

Medetomidine has been identified across several states in the U.S. and Canada, and is recently being observed in severe overdose outbreaks in major metropolitan areas.



MEDETOMIDINE RAPIDLY PROLIFERATING ACROSS USA — IMPLICATED IN RECREATIONAL OPIOID DRUG SUPPLY & CAUSING OVERDOSE OUTBREAKS

EXAMPLE CHROMATOGRAM OF A DRUG MATERIAL CONTAINING MEDETOMIDINE COLLECTED FROM PHILADELPHIA IN EARLY MAY 2024



DRUG MATERIALS CONTAINING MEDETOMIDINE AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

► To date, medetomidine has been commonly identified alongside fentanyl and xylazine, and the proportion of medetomidine in the drug material varies by sample.

► Medetomidine has been identified alongside heroin, in the absence of xylazine.

► Tetracaine has been identified alongside fentanyl, xylazine, and medetomidine in drug products, but not uniformly or consistently.

► Real-time drug material and toxicological testing are on-going to track the emergence and proliferation of medetomidine.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

DRUG	RELATIVE PARTS	DRUG	RELATIVE PARTS
Fentanyl	1p	Fentanyl	1p
Xylazine	1.9p	Xylazine	0.4p
Medetomidine	0.8p	Medetomidine	1.9p
Tetracaine	3.9p	para-Fluorofentanyl	0.1p
Other Substances?	Caffeine	Other Substances?	No

PITTSBURGH, PA

DRUG	RELATIVE PARTS
Fentanyl	1p
Xylazine	1.5p
Medetomidine	0.1p
Tetracaine	0.5p
Other Substances?	pFF, Caffeine

CHICAGO, IL

DRUG	RELATIVE PARTS	DRUG	RELATIVE PARTS
Fentanyl	1p	Heroin	1p
Xylazine	2p	Fentanyl	Trace
Medetomidine	0.6p	Medetomidine	6.3p
Diphenhydramine	0.5p	Diphenhydramine	2.6p
Other Substances?	pFF, Nitazenes, etc.	Other Substances?	No

