

Focus on Rise in Overdoses

The Fentanyl & COVID Epidemics

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Outline

What do the overdose data show?

Why is this happening?

What is Maine doing about it?




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Drug deaths are increasing despite efforts by public health & public safety

- 2019 -----380 ...7% increase
- 2020-----515 ...36% increase
- 2021 est.-636 ...23% increase

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Proportion of deaths due to fentanyl has been increasing

2020	336.....	67%
2021 est.	490.....	77%

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Fentanyl is extremely lethal

25X more potent than oxycodone
50-100X more potent than heroin

Purity is unknown to the user
Added co-intoxicants unknown to user as well.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537482/table/appanex6.tab2/>

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Maine Reflects National Trends

Drug deaths are being driven by fentanyl lethality in Maine and nationally

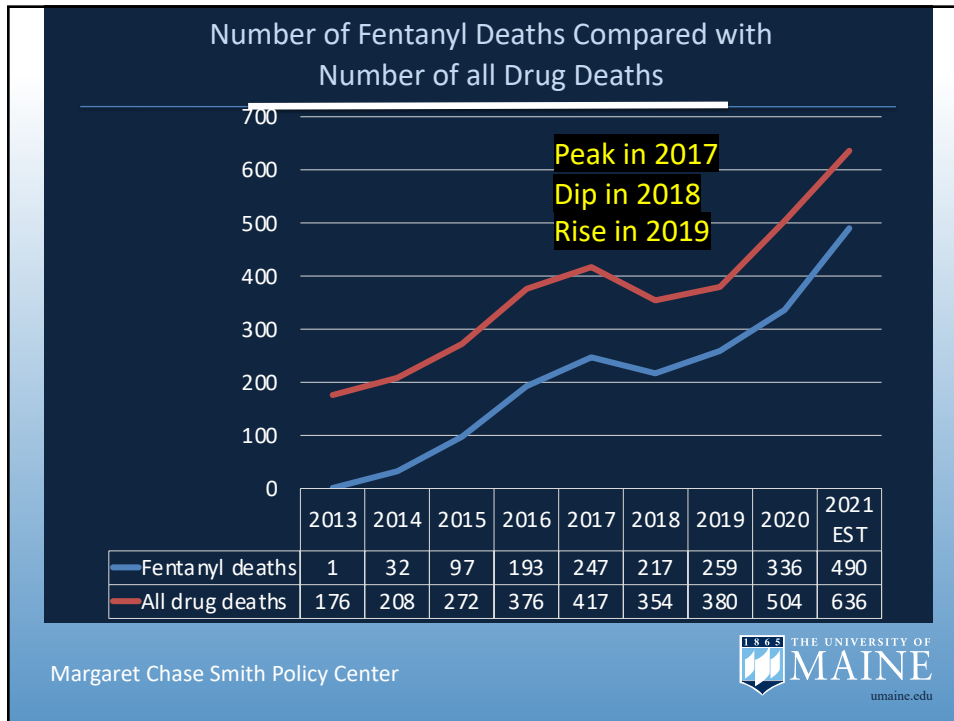
- Began in 2013
- Growth nearly exponential
- Now contaminates stimulant drug supply

Rise and fall of Maine drug death numbers mirrors national trends

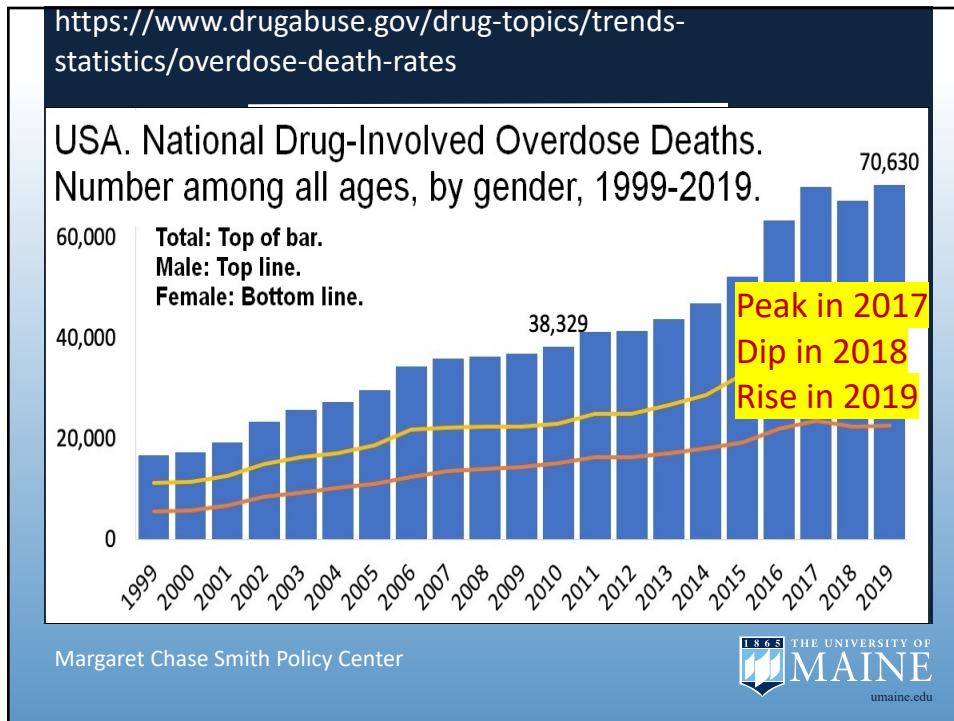
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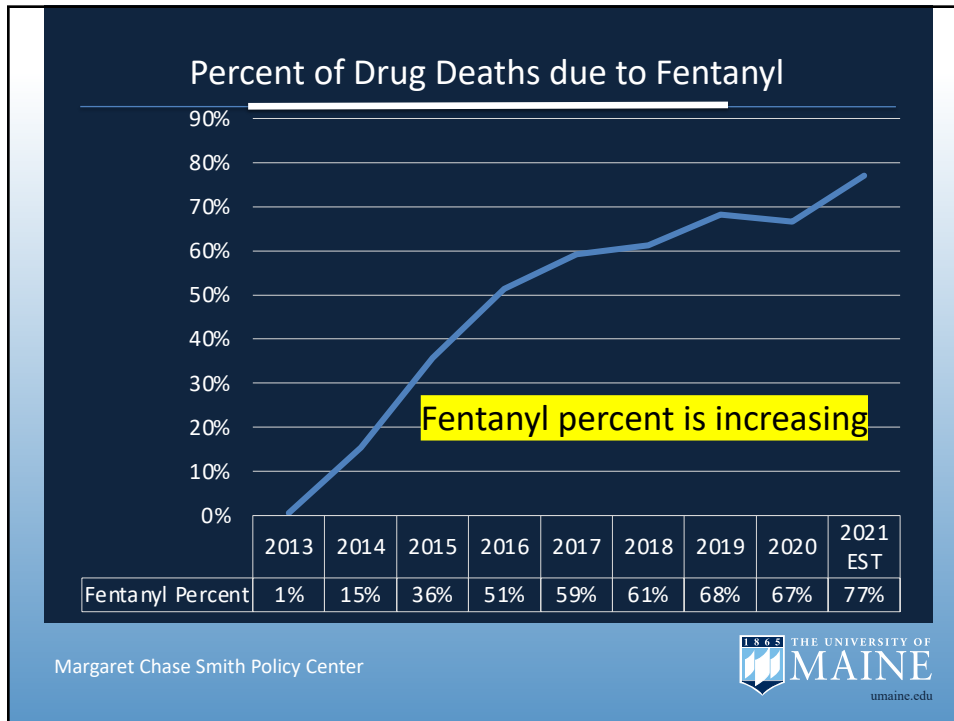
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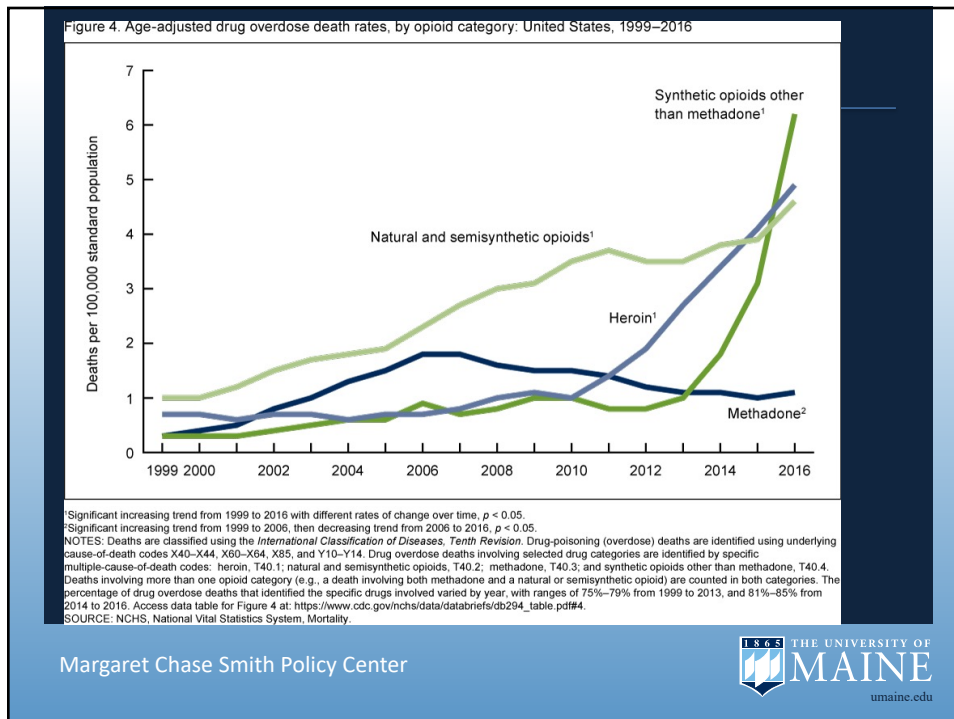
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Fentanyl Supply

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid manufactured in China, and shipped to drug cartels in Mexico for distribution.

Easier to manufacture than to grow heroin.
Smaller amounts to ship because much smaller amounts are needed for same opioid effect.

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Overdose deaths

- Overdose deaths are not the best outcome measure of success or failure of state programs.
- Maine fentanyl supply rises and falls due largely to international drug trafficking, and 77% of the deaths are directly linked to fentanyl.

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Additional Fentanyl Complications

Overdose death toxicology reports in Maine show that fentanyl is being mixed with other potent illicit drugs, especially

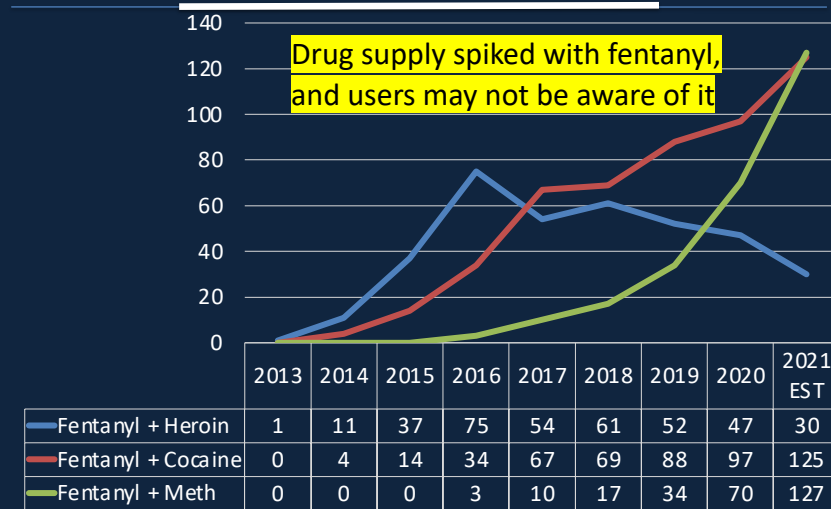
- 46% with cocaine or methamphetamine, or both
- 16% with pharmaceutical opioids (most NOT prescribed)
- 10% with xylazine (new in 2021)

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Fentanyl Co-Intoxicants



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Impacts of Pandemic on Overdoses Reported by Providers who also Distribute Naloxone

- Reduced social supports: “all those safety nets are gone”
- Increased psychological stressors: “stress tolerance is lower”
- Reduced treatment access and changing modalities
 - Treatment work force is reduced
 - Marginalized populations don’t have access to phones and computers for telehealth services
- Isolation --reduced opportunity for bystanders to save lives
- Drug supply limitations –people taking more risky substances & may not be aware of contamination
- Public safety work force is reduced

(SOURCE: Armstrong 2022)

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Interventions to Prevent Fatal Overdoses

Keeping people alive until they get treatment

- Naloxone (Narcan)
- Increasing supply of naloxone in community
- Distribution to those who will be bystanders
- In 2021 Maine Naloxone Distribution Initiative distributed 77,480 doses Jan-Nov
- Get people into treatment –just one example
 - OPTIONS program referred 263 & distributed 909 doses of naloxone in their first program year.


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Nonfatal Overdoses


- Deaths represent 7% of reported overdoses in 2021 January through November
- We are saving 93% of overdose victims
 - Nonfatal overdoses 8619
 - Fatal overdoses 578

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January - November 2021

Overdose Type	Number	Percent
Fatal	578	7%
EMS-Non Transport	2186	25%
Community Reversals	1876	22%
Law Enforcement/No EMS	12	<1%
Emergency Dept.	3967	46%
TOTAL FATAL	578	7%
TOTAL NONFATAL	8,041	93%
TOTAL OVERDOSES.	8,619	100%

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Summary

- Rising Maine overdose deaths are being driven by fentanyl lethality and international drug trafficking combined with effects of pandemic on drug using population.
- Maine has countered with strong naloxone distribution and emergency response, saving lives 93% of the time.

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