



**TO:** West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities

**FROM:** Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP, Commissioner and State Health Officer  
WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health

**DATE:** December 13, 2016

**LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

**OTHER RECIPIENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

The WVDHHR/BPH/Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) has detected analogs of fentanyl that are contributing to overdose deaths in West Virginia. Multiple derivatives of fentanyl are being detected in toxicology results in West Virginia, as well as other states. On October 7, 2016, WVDHHR/BPH released HAN #126 “*Carfentanil Responsible for West Virginia Overdose Deaths*”. As mentioned in HAN #126, Carfentanil, a synthetic opioid that is 100 times more potent than fentanyl and 10,000 times more potent than morphine, can pose a threat to the user, first responders and law enforcement. When a suspected overdose occurs, medical attention and administration of naloxone to reverse the overdose is needed and multiple doses may be required.

The presence of novel opiates in the illicit drug markets cause concern for increasing overdose deaths, even among opioid-tolerant users. Now seven other analogs such as U-47700 (Pink or Pinky), Acetyl fentanyl, Furanyl fentanyl, *para*-Fluoro(iso)butyrnl fentanyl, Acryl fentanyl, and 3-Methyl fentanyl, in addition to Carfentanil, are being detected in toxicology results and linked to overdose deaths. Emergency department visits for heroin overdoses with suspect fentanyl laced analogs are an alarming new trend.

The preliminary number of drug overdose deaths in West Virginia reported as of December 8, 2016 totals 624. Of the 624 deaths, 577 were accidental in nature. A comparison of the first 9 months of accidental drug overdose deaths in 2015 (462) with the same time period in 2016 (549) indicates an 18.8% increase in the number of accidental deaths due to drug overdose. Of the 577 deaths, 506 (87.7%) involved one or more opioids. Through September 2016, accidental drug overdose deaths have accounted for 51.6% of all deaths due to accidents in West Virginia.

With the increase of drug overdoses, providers can refer active users to local needle exchange/harm reduction clinics where available. Providers can also refer active substance users to evidence-based opioid treatment programs, including medication-assisted treatment (MAT). Families and users can call 1 (844) Help4WV, a 24/7 behavioral health and substance abuse helpline, or the WV Poison Center at 1 (800) 222-1222 for assistance. To learn more about treatment options, please review the US DHHS, Surgeon General’s report, “*Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health*” at <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

**Categories of Health Alert messages:**

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance. Warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation. Unlikely to require immediate action.