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Research Field

Drug Trafficking

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Finding Fentanyl: *"Enhancing Police Strategies."*

In 2016, the Government of British Columbia (BC) declared a provincial health crisis after a number of calls and deaths were related to the illicit synthetic drug fentanyl being found on the streets all across the province. Thus, the research question being asked is in what ways police can enhance their strategies to reducing fentanyl being sold on the streets. To help understand and answer the research question, the researcher collected secondary data using a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data for this research was collected from the PRIME-BC database, BC Corner Service (BCCS), and RCMP. Qualitative data was collected through the Saanich Police Department along with academic peer-reviewed literature from the Justice Institute of British Columbia online library database.

Upon analysis the secondary data collected there were a number of key findings. Victoria saw their highest amount of illicit drug overdoses in 2017, parallel to the overall generalization that British Columbia had its worst year of fentanyl-related deaths. The PRIME-BC data collected that 2017 was the busiest year for law enforcement agencies in the Greater Victoria area relating to fentanyl. Of the academic peer-reviewed literature used for the research, three common themes were found: Reverse Control Theory, Online and Technical, and More Research. Moreover, Saanich Police procedural logistics throughout a drug investigation and the process that a team or unit have to follow to gain evidence to a drug-related file identified that over 80 percent of drug investigation seen by Saanich Police Department are cross-jurisdictional and only approximately 30 percent of drug files are concluded. Out of the most recent drug seizures by Saanich Police Department, 31 percent of the fentanyl obtained was in pill form versus 69 percent in powder form.

In conclusion, an overabundance of information and data was collected from academic literature, quantitative and qualitative data from various agencies in BC for this research project. Based on the data collected and the findings there are two main recommendations to enhance police strategies of: Eliminating all municipal drug enforcement units and create a province-wide drug enforcement unit; and create a new province-wide drug intelligence database along with other important recommendations that should also be taken into consideration. By implementing these strategies, police can be better fitted to finding and reducing fentanyl on the streets, as well as, take a more pro-active approach to enforcing and stopping any potential fentanyl coming into Canada.

References:

Provincial Records Information Management Environment of British Columbia. (2018, January 30). Fentanyl-related files in the Greater Victoria Region. Victoria, BC.

Saanich Police Department. (2018). Street-Crimes Unit. Saanich, BC.

JIBC Research Brief

Schulenburg, J. L. (2016). *The dynamics of criminological research*. Don Mills, Ontario, CA: Oxford University Press

Structured Abstract

Introduction: This research project focused on the growing opioid crisis in Canada, particularly with the influx of the synthetically made-illicit opioid drug fentanyl being trafficked into Canada, then sold on the streets. In 2016, the Province of British Columbia declared a province-wide health crisis due to the amount of people overdosing and dying as a result of fentanyl. This shifted mandates, focuses and funding of provincial agencies, especially for law enforcement, to deal with the crisis. Therefore, this research looked at ways to enhance police strategies to reducing the amount of fentanyl being sold on the streets.

Methods: The researcher gathered secondary and statistical data from various agencies and reviewing and analyzing academic literature published through an online academic library database. This report contained a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative data to examining ways in which police can better strategize their approach to enhancing their ability to find fentanyl before it get sold on the streets.

Results/Findings: Researchers found a number of findings from analyzing the secondary and statistical data collected. From the data available of what percentage of overdoses are contributed to fentanyl, where the majority of overdose deaths are occurring, plus the most common method of using, researchers cross-examined the data to fentanyl trafficking. This report discovered approximately how many drug files involve coordination with multiple police agencies, what the preferred method and form the fentanyl being sold on the streets was, the timeline from when fentanyl is being trafficked into Canada then sold out on the streets, what laws in Canada are used to enforce drug trafficking and how the dark-web is assisting drug dealers minimize the risk of trafficking fentanyl. From the findings, a number of key recommendations were proposed to enhance police strategies.

Discussion: This research is important to be discussing because it starts a conversation on how police and government can be more proactive with their methods and strategies to reducing fentanyl trafficking, as well as, lays a foundation for other researcher to begin, continue or branch off and conduct further research based on what was found.

Practical Applications: If government and police were to implement some of the key recommendations proposed based from the research, police could be better equipped with resources and strategies to take a more proactive approach to reducing the amount of fentanyl being sold on the streets rather than a reactive approach, which could result in fewer deaths and overdoses in communities across the province.

References

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