Finding Fentanyl: Enhancing Police Strategies

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Applied Research Project Report

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Abstract

With the growing opioid crisis in Canada, millions of dollars being spend fighting it and many deaths as a result of it, fentanyl has become an up and center issue in Canadian society of recent years. Some argue that the epic centre and focus of this crisis, is in the province of British Columbia (BC). By gathering secondary and statistical data from various agencies and reviewing and analysis academic literature published, this report contains a mixed methods approach to examining ways in which police can better strategize their approach to enhancing their ability to finding fentanyl before it gets sold of the street. Contained within this report, are elements touching on what fentanyl is and where it comes from, what laws in Canada have to fighting fentanyl, and strategizes in which police can utilize to finding fentanyl.

Keywords: Fentanyl, Drug Trafficking, Illicit and Synthetic Drugs, Law Enforcement, Response.

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Background

In 2016, the Government of British Columbia (BC) declared a provincial health crisis after a number of calls and deaths were relating to the illicit synthetic drug fentanyl being found on the streets all across the province. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), fentanyl is a synthetically made prescription drug painkiller, within the family of opioids, which is 50-100 times more potent than the drug morphine used by physicians (2017). The RCMP described fentanyl as coming in either a powder or pill form that is being mixed with other traditional street drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, to cause an individual to experience a "better high" (2017). Fentanyl is an odourless and often times tasteless drug, which the RCMP says is the main cause to why fentanyl is extremely hard to detect upon users. Two milligrams of pure fentanyl is enough to kill an average human adult from exposure by either touching, inhaling, smoking or injecting (2017). As a result, the provincial government expressed the need for health and law enforcement agencies to shift their mandates, resourcing and personnel, as well as funds to reflect the current state of the dangerous opioid crisis. This meant, not only more ambulances and first responders responding to calls out on the streets and more education and preventative measures, but also, the need to find out where the fentanyl was coming from and how to stop it.

Thus, many police agencies across the province followed suit by directing personnel from front-line members to specialized drug and street-crime units to prioritize their time and efforts on fentanyl, much like the Saanich Police Department on Vancouver Island. Saanich Police Department is a municipal police agency serving the District of Saanich within the Greater Victoria Region. In 2016, Saanich Police Department conducted a comprehensive community survey to obtain essential information from the public, about what Saanich Police Department should focus

their time and resources on. As a result, the community identified 13 key strategic priorities for Saanich Police in 2018-2022. One of those priorities is 'Illicit Drug Use Prevention' stated right in the Saanich Police Department's published strategic plan, outlined as "to increase our (Saanich Police) understanding of trends in illicit drug use, work with community partners to prevent the distribution and use of illicit drugs, and reduce the harms associated with use" (Saanich Police Department, 2018).

Moreover, the RCMP, who referenced the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, stated that the majority of fentanyl is being trafficked into Canada is coming from China, which is then formatted and combined with other illegal substances and sold out on the streets (2017). Therefore, with the problem of fentanyl being out on the streets and killing people by the hundreds, has created the complicated task for police agencies and specialized drug and street-crime units to focus on two parts: A) Fentanyl coming in from foreign markets into Canada (International); and B) Fentanyl being formatted and combined with other drugs then trafficked and sold out on the streets (Domestic).

Research Question and Rationale

The main question asked throughout this research is what strategies could police and law enforcement officials utilize to help reduce the amount of fentanyl being sold on the streets. In order to answer the question, this research was been broken down into sub-categories to gain a better understand of the fentanyl related crisis happening in BC. First, this research focused on finding and examining current academic literature relating to the illicit drug trade, the art of drug trafficking, and the introduction of fentanyl into the illicit drug market. Second, this research examined the statistical data collected from various provincial agencies connecting to fentanyl

related deaths and fentanyl related occurrences from both a health and law enforcement view. This will provide a better understanding of the complex and dynamic situation to the fentanyl crisis in terms of who is using and dying as a result, in addition to, the situation police are facing on the streets. The third and final category of this research discusses is what current laws are in Canada that police are forced to comply with and/or challenged by creating opportunities to addressing these laws to answer the question.

The goal of this research is to focus on the domestic part of fentanyl trafficking by providing police a critical and thorough understanding of academic literature of drug trafficking, illicit drugs as well as fentanyl and the opioid crisis in BC, in addition to delivering a series of recommendations and conclusions based on the research found to providing strategies to helping police fight the ongoing fentanyl opioid crisis. This research report will offer police and law enforcement officials the ability to not only further their insight and knowledge on the fentanyl-related crisis but also take the recommendations suggested into consideration, which could result in greater resources and strength on the streets, higher arrests and convictions and overall lower deaths and tragedies for families.

Literature Review

As an essential part and sub-category to answering the research question, is the academic literature review. This research examined academic literature that applied to drug trafficking, illicit drug market and fentanyl. The academic articles are peer-reviewed and was completed on the Justice Institute of British Columbia Library EBSO*host* online.

The first search term applied in the literature review was fentanyl. It was important to note that because fentanyl was first created for a pain killer, many of the articles were medical based

research. The initial hit within the online library database was 133,000 articles. Of those articles, only 1 out of 30 were criminal or law enforcement focused, equivalent to only three per cent of the overall total hit. With insufficient articles from the first hit of the search term fentanyl, the researcher added a number of inclusion criteria to the search. This included being peer-reviewed, academic, and dated from the years 2010 to 2018. With the addition inclusion criteria, the number of hits produced 7,666 articles. Out of the search, approximately 9 of the first 30 articles were criminal or law enforcement related. This increased the number of relevant hits to 30 percent, more than 10 times the first hit. From there, the researcher applied an advanced term to the hit of 'police.' This reduced the amount of overall articles greatly to a total of 2,863. Interestingly enough, when an advanced search was applied, all the inclusion criteria was erased. Therefore, inserting the inclusion criteria again, into the advanced search, delivered a manageable list of articles of 147.

The second search term used for this academic literature review was 'Illicit Drugs.' When searching illicit drugs into the library database, it produced a total of 19,752 articles. An unfeasible amount of articles, similar to the first hit. Thus, the researcher advanced searched illicit drugs with two terms of 'Canada' and 'police' along with the inclusion criteria of being academic, peer-reviewed, and aged between 2010 and 2018, and as a result, created a hit list of 1,236 articles. Of the two lists, a total of 21 articles were selected, based on the relative information that could be applied to answering the overall question of the research. What was clear to the researcher, was that many of the articles have common key terms associated between them such as drug market, drug trafficking, laws and legislation, law enforcement or police and overdoses. All very important key subject terms relating to the overall importance of this research. Further analysis of the articles selected, it was found that there were common themes among the literature.

Reverse Control Theory: One-Step Ahead

Throughout the academic literature review, it was becoming apparent that the concept of reverse control theory was a major factor into the illicit drug trade and fentanyl on the streets. Reverse Control Theory is the belief that when something is set in place or applied, such as law, designed for a specific target or goal, such as reduced drugs, it actually has the opposite effect, making it ineffective. Frequently, law enforcement and law makers are playing 'catch up' when it comes to the drug market and drug trafficking because of the opportunity and pressure the laws deliver to drug dealers.

In translation, many of the authors and researchers reiterate that when governments pass legislation posing new laws with the purpose or goal of reducing illegal drugs on the street in addition to increasing police powers, has actually the reserve effect by increasing the amount of illicit drugs on the streets. Jacques and Wright (2011) discussed how anti-drug legislation and enforcement in the US, with the purpose of reducing the drug trafficking, actually increase the amount of drug trafficking in an informal control capacity by drug users and dealers. Unlike formal control of the drug trade such as arrests, laws, and jail sentencing by the justice system, informal control of the drug trade is predominately controlled by the organize crime groups and drug dealers. This includes offences such as: violence, theft, and fraud. With respects to drug trafficking, there is evidence to suggest that drug trafficking is not at random but actually methodologically and purposely planned out into the specific routes, often times because of the laws that are implemented (Aziani, Berlusconi & Giommoni, 2017). This suggested that the people responsible, often times organized crime groups, who operate drug trafficking as part of their business, plan their trafficking routes specifically and purposely to the laws and logistics of that geographical jurisdiction to be one-step ahead to avoid being detected and/or caught. Moreover, Descroches

(2005) explained that within the drug trafficking and drug market, organized crime groups study the laws and regulations within the geographical jurisdiction, as well as, even regularly hire professionals, such as lawyers, to advise criminals of ways to strategically plan a drug trafficking route and how to avoid detection from law enforcement. This advantage, again, allows drug dealers and organized crime groups to plan and come up with new ideas/strategies to transport their product around the laws and regulation to continue business as normal. In contrast, but supporting the position of the reverse control theory, Jenner (2011) argued that complete universal legalization of drugs could put a significant attack on the illegal illicit drug trade. By focusing on a number of different areas of the drug trafficking market in relation to the concept of universal legalization, such as the history of the drug trade, past attempts to control the drug trade, new ways to end the violence associated with drug trafficking in realistic and obtainable ways and lastly a framework to control drugs if they were to become legal, the reserve could happen in terms of reducing the amount of drugs on the streets.

Technical and Online

Continuing from the concept of reverse control theory, the new era of technology had forced and motivated drug dealers and organized crime groups to go more technical and online with their strategies. Research showed that there are major factors that contribute to how drug dealers and organized crime groups move their products. These factors include risk, profits, geographic and social proximity to market, time and police officers per capita (Aziani, Berlusconi & Giommoni, 2017). Building off the concept of risk, a way in which drug dealers and organized crime groups seen a way to reduce risk while maintain profits was to go online. Dolliver, Ericson, and Love (2018) discussed that drug trafficking patterns seen from data collected off the TOR Network, based on information from six countries mainly in Europe but also Canada and the

United States, proved that drug dealers and organized crime groups were increasing their online presence. The TOR network is a search engine created so that IP addresses bounce of difference servers around the world, making it virtually impossible for law enforcement officials to track criminal organizations and drug dealers who are purchasing illicit drugs online.

Furthermore, there was research that showed specifically for the first time that the drug trafficking market in the world was more technical then ever, as well as, being run by basic principles similar to the world commodity market. International Journal of Drug Policy, Ciccarone (2017), examined a critical turning point to why fentanyl was introduced into the heroin market. The heroin market was flooded by supply from Latin and South America, Mexico and South-East Asian parts of the world. As a result, this drove heroin prices down, making organized crime groups scrambling to find ways to making their product the best on the market for people to buy. Fentanyl was then introduced and exploded the market. One can make comparisons to the oil market in 2014 when the supply of oil was greater than the demand for oil, therefore, the price of oil dramatically decreased as a result, forcing business and governments to re-develop their strategic business and economic plans.

More Research Needed

Starting from the beginning of the academic literature review into fentanyl and drug trafficking from the Justice Institute of British Columbia Library EBSO*host,* it became apparent that there was considerable lack of research based on the results that only three per cent of the first 30 articles were law enforcement focused suggesting that there is an absence of research of fentanyl from a law enforcement stance. Making over 95 percent of the academic literature published medical related. Almost all the articles relating to fentanyl and drug trafficking suggested areas in which research could be continued, enhanced, challenged or taken upon based

on the research already completed. For instance, with world markets and drug trafficking trade becoming more technical and advanced in terms of being online, there is hug potential of growth to study the illegal online network. Dolliver, Ericson, and Love (2018) discussed and suggested that more research and understanding of the Tor Network and online drug sales is needed in order to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the world. Moreover, more research can be done in other areas surrounding fentanyl with respect to how the drug trafficking and world drug market has changed over the decades. Descroches (2005) research was primarily from the data straight from the drug dealers and criminals themselves which was unique for the aspect that the research did not rely on police and government data. This created the opportunity for researchers to collect data straight from the source rather than law enforcement officials. With fentanyl being relatively new to the market, much of the research today is solely founded from government and police data. This is leaving a gap of unknowns to what police do not know, therefore, the opportunity to have more research done straight from the fentanyl users, dealers and traffickers themselves is key approach that needs to be examined.

Research Design and Methodology

To help understand and answer the research question, the mixed methods approach was selected and best-suited for the purpose of this research. All data collected for this research was secondary data as primary data was not considered due to the fact a thorough and extensive ethical review process would have had to been completed, which would have taken an undetermined amount of time to complete and that time is not available. Nonetheless, a mixed methods design was used and is defined as “one that answers questions using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analytical techniques” (Schulenburg, 2016, p.45-46). Quantitative approach comprises statistical analysis or interpretation of data collected using numbers whereas the

qualitative approach consists of categorically describing elements of data that is non-numerical (Schulenburg, 2016, p.45-46). The advantage of using the mixed methods design for this research is that quantitative numerical data can add meaning and support to the accuracy of the qualitative data collected by providing better understanding and confidence from the inferences and conclusions made from the data collected in the research, in addition to enhancing the evidence to support positions or insights from the data that one approach simply could not (Schulenburg, 2016, p. 45-46).

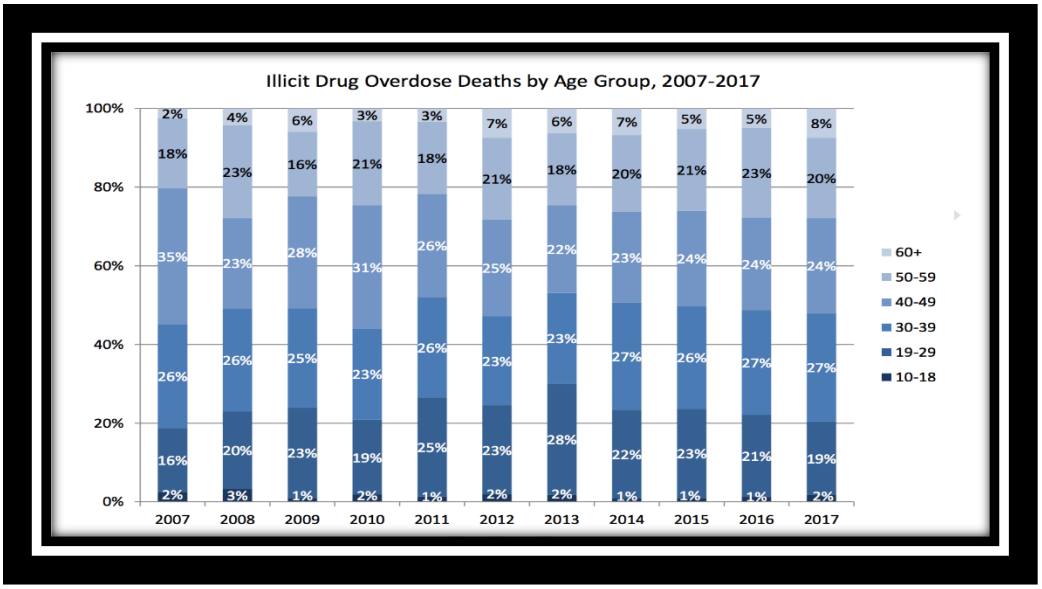
Quantitative Data Collected

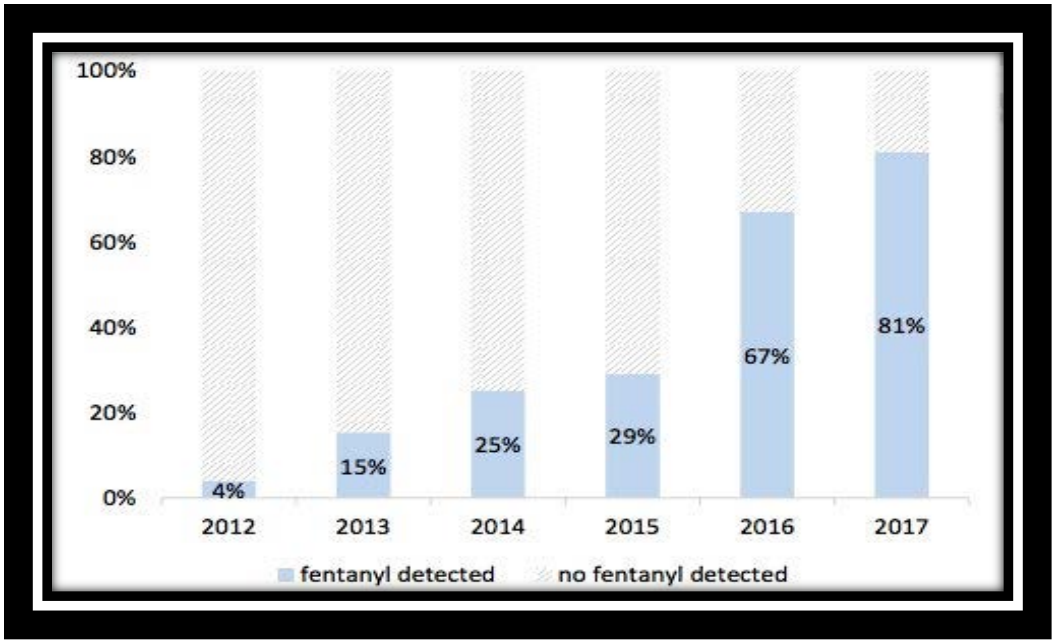
The quantitative secondary data collected for this research was sourced from two main government agencies to providing statistical data on fentanyl within the province of British Columbia. Starting with the British Columbia Corner Service (BCCS), the statistical data was obtained from the 'Fentanyl-Detected Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths from January 1, 2012 to December 31st, 2017' report published publically and online on January 31st, 2018. This data provided a core understanding and insight to the fentanyl crisis happening in British Columbia. The data demonstrated that of all the illegal drugs being sold on the streets, what was fentanyl being found mixed in with most based on toxicology reports at death plus the geographical areas in BC that were most affected by fentanyl; the location of the most deaths that are happening (home, street, shelter, etc.); age and gender of the victims; and day and month where most deaths relating to fentanyl occurs.

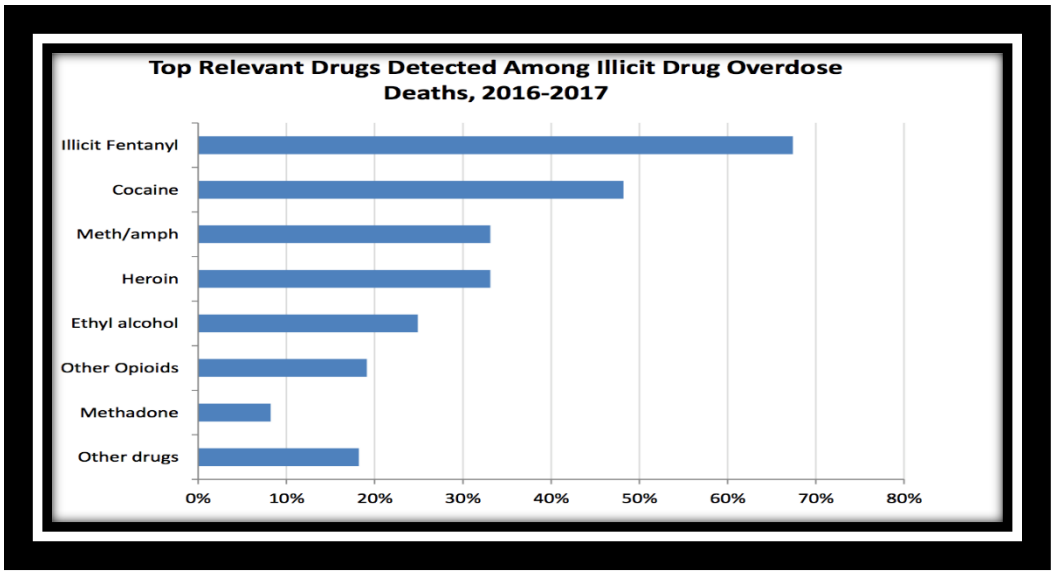
Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths by Top Townships of Injury, 2007-2017* [2,4]

Township	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Vancouver	59	38	60	42	69	65	80	101	136	234	358
Surrey	22	20	23	33	42	44	36	44	76	122	174
Victoria	19	29	13	13	17	17	25	20	22	69	91
Kelowna	6	2	5	9	14	8	12	12	19	47	75
Nanaimo	2	2	6	4	8	6	20	16	18	29	51
Abbotsford	3	4	4	10	16	7	10	7	26	39	49
Burnaby	9	12	8	9	10	10	13	12	16	39	41
Kamloops	11	7	7	10	2	5	8	7	7	44	39
Langley	3	6	2	3	10	5	10	10	10	30	36
Maple Ridge	5	2	6	4	4	5	10	14	29	27	33
Coquitlam	2	2	5	2	3	6	1	10	11	14	29
Chilliwack	3	4	2	2	8	8	6	6	10	12	24
Richmond	0	1	3	4	4	1	3	3	6	14	24
Prince George	5	2	4	1	6	10	7	10	12	19	22
New Westminster	1	4	2	6	6	3	5	9	12	10	22
Other Township	52	48	51	59	75	69	87	88	108	244	354
Total	202	183	201	211	294	269	333	369	518	993	1422

*sorted by 2017 totals





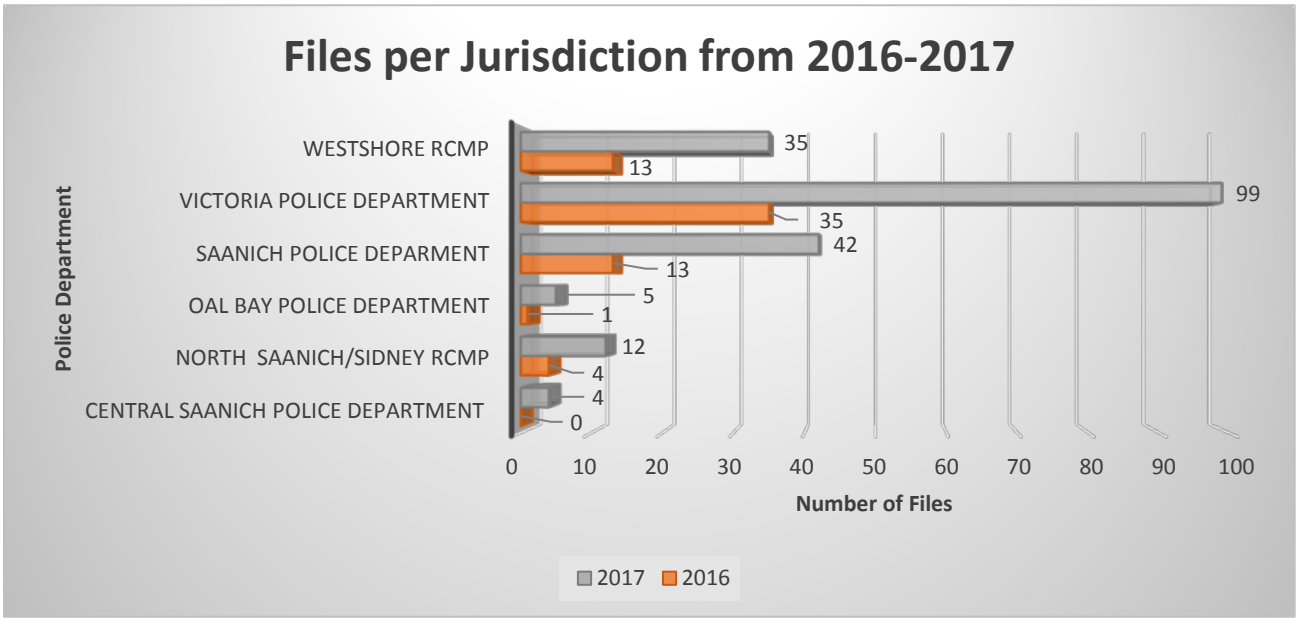


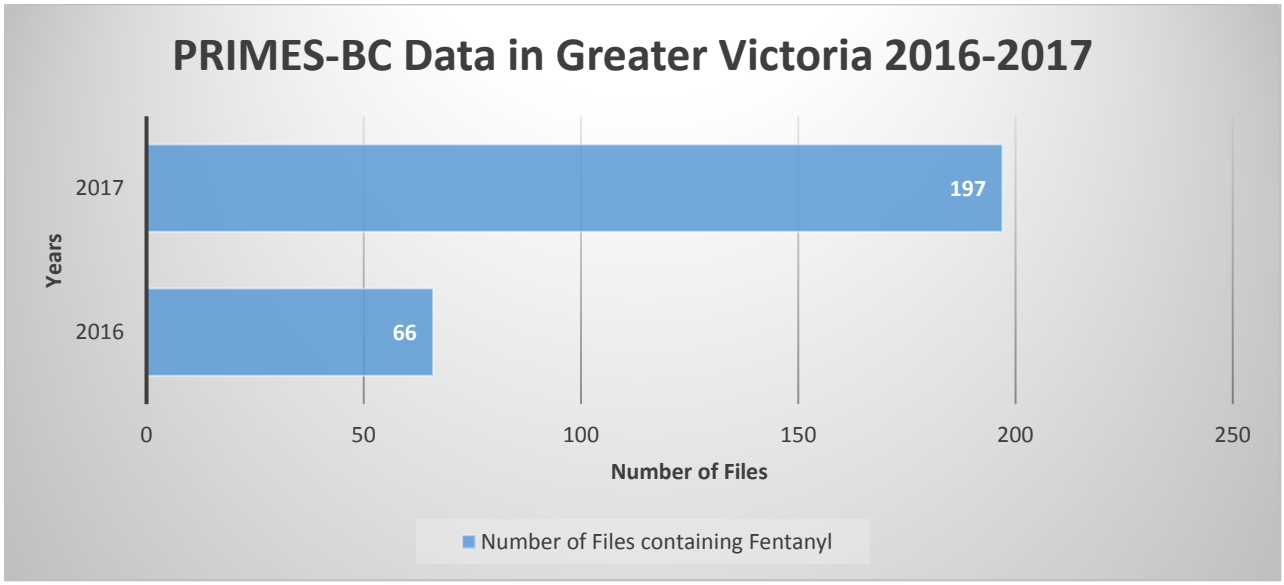
Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths by Place of Injury, BC, 2016-2018[2]

	2016	2017	2018
Inside:			
Private Residence	617 (62.1%)	861 (59.5%)	143 (62.7%)
Other Residence	230 (23.2%)	353 (24.4%)	52 (22.8%)
Other Inside	37 (3.7%)	55 (3.8%)	12 (5.3%)
Outside	105 (10.6%)	166 (11.5%)	18 (7.9%)
Unknown	4 (0.4%)	11 (0.8%)	3 (1.3%)
Total	993	1,446	228

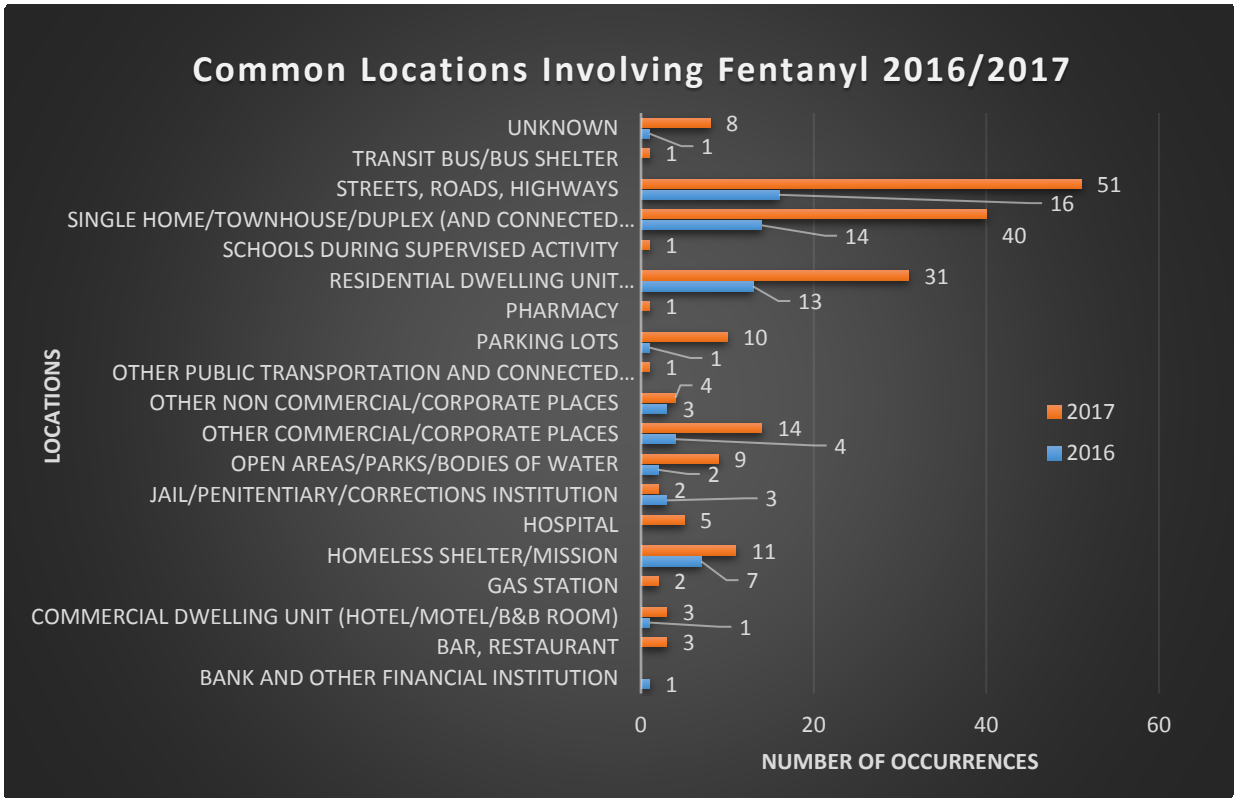
Moreover, this research examined the BC Police-Records-Information-Management-Environment otherwise known as PRIME-BC. PRIME-BC is a record management system solely in BC that allows police to electronically query or populate other indexed data repository systems in law enforcement such as CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre) and the CFRS (Canadian Firearms Registration System) (RCMP, 2017). Therefore, gathering information and data related to fentanyl from the database provides an insight and better understanding to what police in BC come across when it comes to fentanyl. More specifically, the data collected was only focused on the Greater Victoria Region, which consists of the Victoria Police Department, Saanich Police

Department, Central Saanich Police Department, Oak Bay Police Department, Westshore RCMP, and North Saanich/Sidney RCMP. The search comprised of anything that went into the PRIME-BC system with fentanyl as a subject term dating back to 2016.






Fentanyl-Related Investigation Outcomes in Victoria Region
OCCURRENCES
YTH-SUS CHG 1
YTH-CHARGED 1
SUSPECT 9
SUSP CHGBLE 8
SUB OF COMP 189
RECOMND CHG 12
PEDESTRIAN 1
OF INTEREST 19
EDP 16
DRIVER 9
DECEASED 19
CHARGED 47
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200
NUMBER OF FILES


Common Locations Involving Fentanyl 2016/2017
LOCATIONS
UNKNOWN 8 1
TRANSIT BUS/BUS SHELTER 1 1
STREETS, ROADS, HIGHWAYS 51 16
SINGLE HOME/TOWNHOUSE/DUPLEX (AND CONNECTED... 40 14
SCHOOLS DURING SUPERVISED ACTIVITY 1
RESIDENTIAL DWELLING UNIT... 31 13
PHARMACY 1
PARKING LOTS 10 1
OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTED... 1 4
OTHER NON COMMERCIAL/CORPORATE PLACES 3
OTHER COMMERCIAL/CORPORATE PLACES 14 4
OPEN AREAS/PARKS/BODIES OF WATER 9 2
JAIL/PENITENTIARY/CORRECTIONS INSTITUTION 2 3
HOSPITAL 5
HOMELESS SHELTER/MISSION 11 7
GAS STATION 2
COMMERCIAL DWELLING UNIT (HOTEL/MOTEL/B&B ROOM) 3 1
BAR, RESTAURANT 3
BANK AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTION 1
2017
2016
0 20 40 60
NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES

Quantitative Data Analysis

Upon analysing the statistical quantitative data from the BC Coroner Service and PRIME-BC, researchers made a number of inferences in regards to fentanyl. Beginning with the BC Coroners Service (BCCS), data presented much needed information about the demographics and circumstances surrounding fentanyl-related deaths in the province. Victoria is seen to be the third highest in the province when it comes to fentanyl-related deaths, only behind Vancouver and Surrey respectively. Victoria is comprised of the all the municipalities within the Greater Victoria Region, which includes the District of Saanich. Overall, Victoria seen its highest amount of illicit drug overdoses in 2017 at 91 deaths, parallel to the overall generalization that British Columbia had its worse year of fentanyl-related deaths. Moreover, consistent for the past two years, the age range of 30-39 years-old accounted for the highest percentage of deaths across the province at 27 percent followed by 40-49 years-old at 24 percent, suggesting that over half of the fentanyl and illicit drug deaths across the province are people in their prime adulthood. Furthermore, illicit fentanyl accounted for almost 70 percent of all over overdose deaths within the province, in addition to that private residences made up over 60 percent of the location in which a person was mostly likely to die from illicit drug overdoses.

Aside from the health statistics, law enforcement statistics are just as crucial in understanding the dynamics of the fentanyl crisis in BC. The PRIME-BC database demonstrated, and supported BCCS stats, that 2017 was the busiest year for law enforcement agencies in the Greater Victoria Region at 197 files relating to fentanyl. Out of the six agencies inside the Greater Victoria Region, Victoria Police Department encountered the most files in 2017 at 99, followed by Saanich Police Department at 42 files and Westshore RCMP at a close third with 35 files. This

could be the result of the City of Victoria having the downtown core and vulnerable sector of the homeless population, a prime target for drug dealers and drug traffickers to sell too. Subsequently, Saanich Police Department was second due to the highest number of dwelling homes, as well as, two major articular routes (Highway 17 and Trans-Canada Highway) and two major post-secondary institutions of University of Victoria and Camosun College. Furthermore, the PRIME-BC data distinguished the most common places that police dealt with files relating to fentanyl. Starting with the top, the most common place in 2017 that police encountered fentanyl was the highway, street, or roadway followed by single family home, townhouse or duplex and then residential dwelling units or apartments. Lastly, the PRIME-BC data categorized the individuals related to the file and the outcome of the respected investigation. First and at the top, the subject of a compliant were most charged or chargeable at 189, followed by persons charged at 47, and tied for third at 19 was persons of interest and decreased. The PRIME-BC data provided an in-depth picture and understanding of the type of files and encounters law enforcement faced with respects to fentanyl.

Qualitative Data Collected

Parallel to gathering quantitative data, qualitative data was also gathered. For this research, data was collected from the British Columbia Emergency Health Services, otherwise known as British Columbia Ambulance Service (BCAS), Government of Canada, Saanich Police Department and the RCMP. Starting with the BCAS, this research reacted out to find common denominators of fentanyl related calls. While the BCAS does not keep statistics on fentanyl related calls specifically due to the fact the BCAS use a “Medical Priority Dispatch System” or MPDS, that only tells paramedics that an overdose is occurring and not the substance causing the overdose (BCAS, personal communication, 2018). Moreover, the most common preferred method of drug

use was injection, most common patient is male between the ages of 19-59 years old, and the majority of drug related calls happening in the Greater Victoria Region was in the downtown core, although, most deaths occurred in private residences (BCAS, personal communication, 2018).

In response to the increased overdoses and provincial health crisis in 2016, the RCMP released a webpage dedicated to fentanyl. The RCMP described that in 2012, the company responsible for making oxycodone changed it chemical formula to make it less addicting, which resulted in any oxycodone pills being sold on the streets today being actually fentanyl (RCMP, 2016). In Canada, the fentanyl being sold on the streets were pressed into pills, dyed green and stamped with 'CDN 80' to replicate a pre-2012 oxycodone pill (RCMP, 2016). The pill presses and machines used to convert the fentanyl substance into a pill form are not regulated in Canada or China, therefore, the Canadian Association of Chief of Police has called for action from the Canadian Government to create new legislation banning or imposing regulations on pill presses entering Canada (RCMP, 2016).

In response to the building pressure, the Canadian Government created Bill-C37. Bill-C37 is an act to amend the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA), as well as, other related acts directly targeting the fentanyl-crisis. The Canadian Government made four very important changes to Canadian law. The changes are stated as: 1. Streamlines and simplifies the application process for communities who wish to open supervised consumption sites, while ensuring that community consultation continues to be an integral part of the process; 2. Prohibits unregistered importation of designated devices that may be used in the illicit manufacture of controlled substances, such as pill presses and encapsulators; 3. Amends the Customs Act to remove the exception that prevents border officers from opening mail weighing 30 grams or less, in order to stop drugs, like fentanyl, from entering Canada illicitly through the mail system; and 4. Makes a number of amendments to

the CDSA, such as allowing temporary scheduling of controlled substances and faster disposition of drugs and substances by law enforcement, which would allow the government and law enforcement greater flexibility in addressing emerging risks (Health Canada, 2017). The Bill was passed through the House of Commons and the Senate and received royal assent on May 19, 2017 to become officially law.

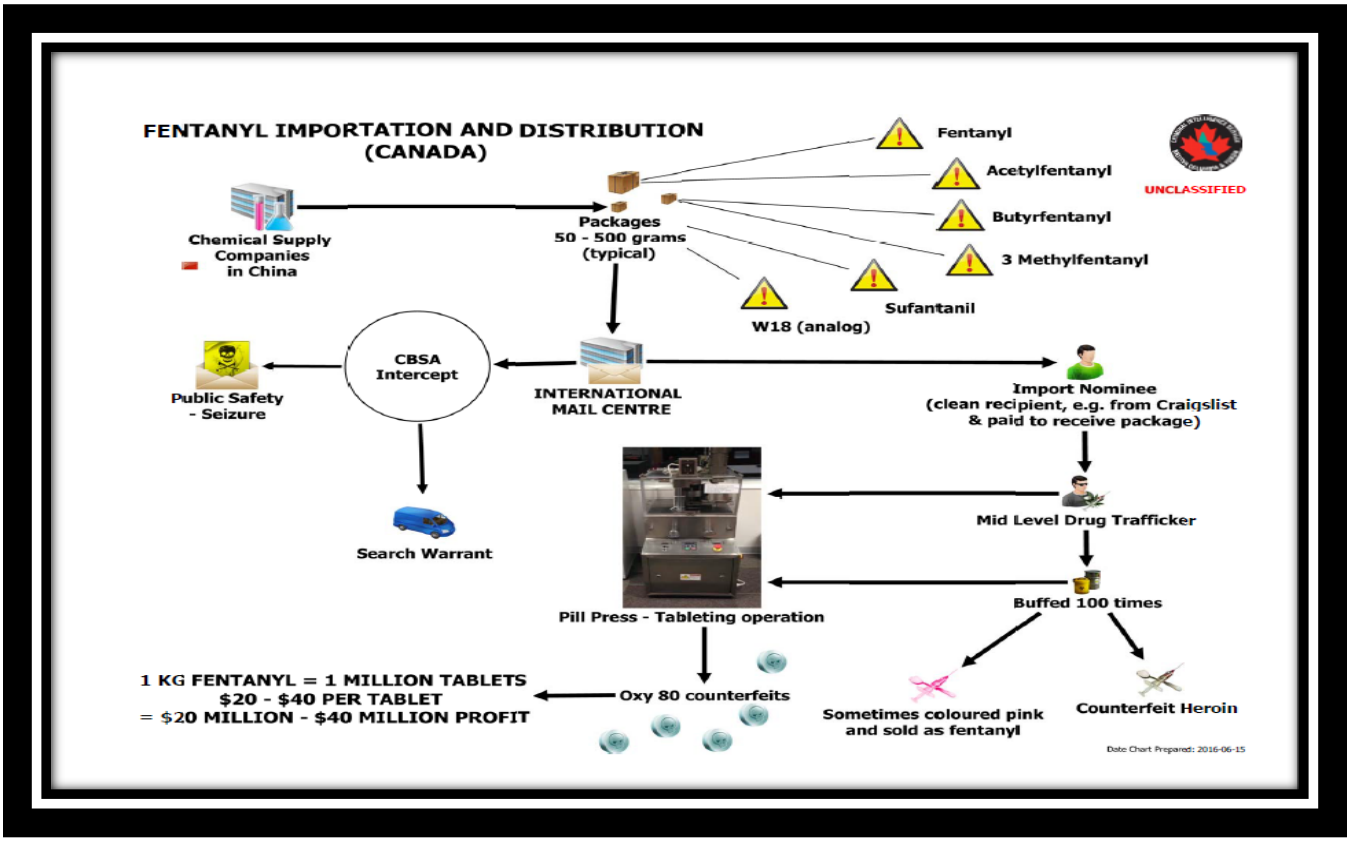
Focusing more local, the Saanich Police Department provided in-depth qualitative data in relation to local drug trafficking and drug investigations. Saanich Police (2018) indicated that within their department, the Street-Crime Unit is responsible for drug investigations which consists of 10 police officers (5 for drugs and 5 for property crimes) plus 2 Sergeants to supervise the unit. The team of 12 police officers investigates approximately 70-100 files per year, however, more files may be added from previous years that are considered historic and/or cold in nature. The team meets on a daily basis to triage new files and prioritize, though, many files are concluded simply due to the lack of time and resources available (Saanich Police, personal communication, 2018). Of the files that an average investigator/detective is assigned, only approximately 30 percent of files are concluded, which Saanich Police stated was due to other higher priority files taking precedence which restricted manpower and time. Other reasons include files being unfounded, minor in nature such as possession of marijuana, do not make it past the call-takers (Dispatch), as well as, many files do not transfer from patrol division to detective division or from the supervisors to detectives (Saanich Police, personal communication, 2018).

Saanich Police explained that out of every 10 files they received in 2016, 8 of them involved having to go into another police agency's jurisdiction such as Victoria Police Department or Westshore RCMP to be investigated. Saanich Police provided details to why that was. A file maybe investigated because of another agency's 'Confidential Informer' information provided. A

file may be initiated by an outside agency and requested Saanich Police to complete the file as the suspect(s) lives within the municipality of Saanich. A file Saanich Police will conduct surveillance for because a suspect(s) is working or temporarily staying within the municipality of Saanich; and/or a file maybe initiated by Saanich Police then transferred to another agency due to the suspect(s) working, living or operating out of the municipality of Saanich (Saanich Police, personal communication, 2018).

Because a high percentage of files are cross-jurisdictional, gathering intelligence and files from other agencies is frequent. Saanich Police explained the process in which how police officers gather intelligence and information from other agencies. The police officer investigating the file will put a formal request into Saanich Police Department's Intelligence Section, who will then formally pass that request onto the agency with the intelligence needed (ex. Victoria Police Department or RCMP). From there, the responding agency with the intelligence or information will find and complete a thorough vetting and dissemination of that report. Once completed, that agency will approve the transfer of intelligence and transfer the file back to the Saanich Police Intelligence Section. The Saanich Police Intelligence Section with then review the report before being passed down to the investigating police officer. In all, this process can take up to two weeks if not longer depending on the agency or can have the ability to be expedited based on urgency (Saanich Police, personal communication 2018). Furthermore, once Saanich Police seize or confiscate any illegal drugs through investigations, the police officer must send it to a Health Canada Lab in Vancouver, BC, to get results back of what the result of that substance is. Saanich Police state that the approximately wait time to get results back is about two months (Saanich Police, personal communication, 2018). In addition, Saanich Police described that out of all the fentanyl seized or observed from 2015 to present, 31 percent was in pill form and 69 percent was

in powder form (Saanich Police, personal communication, 2018). Saanich Police also provided a diagram, created by the RCMP, to explain the flow of drug trafficking of fentanyl within the province of British Columbia.



(RCMP, 2018)

The RCMP stated that from the time the fentanyl is imported from China, goes through the process and buffed then sold out of the streets, can be a minimum of 10 days to a month (RCMP, personal communication, 2018).

Qualitative Data Analysis

When analysing the qualitative data collected, again, a number of interference can be made in relation to fentanyl. The BCAS provided information that pertains to the type of calls they

received in relation to ‘drug overdoses’ calls, however, specifically stated that BCAS dispatch system does not allow or track overdoses that are specifically categorized as ‘Fentanyl.’ BCAS also discussed the demographics in which they come into frequent contact with form overdose calls which was males between the ages of 19-59 years-old. Another key piece of information that BCAS provided was the preferred method that paramedics see in users out on calls which was injection or (IV-*Intravenous).* This is a very critical fact from the BCAS to providing in-depth and insight to which forms of drugs are predominately being sold on the streets. In addition, BCAS stated that they attended the most calls for service relating to drug-overdoses in the downtown core of Victoria.

Onward, the RCMP provided a concept with details to why fentanyl was first introduced into the Canadian drug market. The RCMP explained that because of the change in oxycodone’s chemical formula in 2012 making it less addictive, drug dealers formulated fentanyl into pill form to replicate oxycodone on the streets. Making the notion that users want the best ‘high’ from their drug dealers and drug dealers want the best product sold on the streets. As a result the RCMP stated, organized crime groups and drug dealers were purchasing pill presses from online in large quantities and having them shipped into Canada with no questions asked. This was seen as a problem by the Canadian Association of Chief of Police who called upon the Canadian Government to act. The Canadian Government responded months later with Bill-C37, which became law in May-2017, with sweeping measures to strengthen enforcement of drug trafficking laws, which included banning non-registered pill-presses, plus preventative measures to reducing fentanyl-related deaths, like approving safe-injection sites. Furthermore, Saanich Police provides an insight to the procedural logistics of what investigative team endures throughout a drug investigation and the process that a team or unit have to follow to gain evidence to a drug-related

file. Saanich Police also stated that over 80 percent of drug investigation seen by their department with cross-jurisdictional and only approximately 30 percent of drug files are concluded. Another piece of information, Saanich Police disclosed was the fact that in order to obtain intelligence or information from another department could take up to two weeks, and if detectives sent an unknown substance to the lab for testing, could take up to two months to get results back.

Discussions, Findings, and Potential Ethical Issues

Throughout the collection of academic literature and both quantitative and qualitative data, there are a number of key findings and discussion points that can be examined. Many similarities could be compared from the literature review and quantitative and qualitative data collected, starting with the medical aspect. The BCAS provided information that was consistent with the BCCS statistical data in terms of the demographic portfolio that is most frequent in the province of British Columbia. A middle-aged male was the most common patient seen by first responders on fentanyl-related call. In addition, BCAS stated that their highest call volume for illicit-drug calls is in the downtown core of Victoria. In addition, BCAS data obtained helps the public understand where the primarily focus of first responder's time is being allocated fighting the crisis, making the assumption that street or homeless people were the highest users and dying the most. However, BCCS data stated the opposite in relation to fentanyl-related deaths because in 2016, private residence accounted for over 61 percent of the deaths, not on the street. Moreover, BCAS data is comparable to the PRIME-BC data that showed Victoria Police Department had the highest number of calls associated with fentanyl, something one could argue because Victoria Police has the downtown core. Again, making the assumption, most fentanyl-laced drugs are being trafficking into the downtown core of Victoria. BCAS also provide insight to the preferred method of use which was injection, suggesting that the majority fentanyl being sold on the streets is in non-pill

form, reaffirming Saanich Police's data of 31 percent pill vs. 69 percent powder being seized on the streets.

Continuing with the RCMP and Canadian Association of Chief of Police, both pressured the Government of Canada to create new laws to strengthen drug trafficking legislation and provide more powers to police. As a result, two important amendments were implemented into law such as: 1) Border Service and Post Canada Agents are allowed to open up packages suspected of illegal drugs the weigh under 30 grams at the border or international mail centre, and 2) ban the illegal entry of un-registered pill presses being purchases on the internet. Referencing the chart created by the RCMP, most fentanyl was being trafficking into Canada via the mail and in small packages to reduce risk and be less noticeable. As well as, once the fentanyl got across the border, drug dealers would search online for 'Import Nominees' to accept the package. From there, the drugs would be picked up then brought to a 'drug lab' to be buffered approximately 100 times, pill pressed or packaged, then sold on the streets. This process supports the academic literature in two aspects. First, within the literature a common theme of reverse control theory in which organized crime groups and drug dealers are one step ahead of law enforcement. This means that drug trafficking is methodologically planned to a number of factors such as risk and profit, as seen in the diagram of how the fentanyl is trafficked into Canada to avoid detection. Secondly, the academic literature stated that the business of drug trafficking was becoming more technical and online. This can be seen for instance, as the literature explained, the TOR network was a primary resource to purchasing fentanyl internationally within minimal risk associated, in addition to, once the fentanyl is in Canada, drug dealers are searching online for individuals willing to accept the packages.

Furthermore, the RCMP said that the whole process from purchasing the fentanyl online, transporting it into Canada, buffing it, producing it and then selling it on the streets (seen in the diagram) can take a minimum of 10 days to an average of a month. After reviewing Saanich Police qualitative data, it became noticeable that police are continuously caught in a time frame backlog that takes weeks to obtain critical information relating to drug investigations that police might not otherwise have simply because drug dealers are always trafficking and producing drugs. From an average of two weeks to obtain information from another agencies, to not enough resources to manage the file load, and approximately two months to get results back on an unknown substance, it is transparent that more is needed to speed up the process in getting police answers related to drug trafficking investigations.

In regards to potential ethical issues related to this research, a critical ethical issue is in-regards to the secondary information that was obtained and who it was provided by. Because the focus of this research is on fentanyl and drug trafficking, a large amount of information collected was through anonymous and confidential people from Saanich Police and RCMP therefore making sure this research did not and does not violate the confidentiality of the individuals who provided the information is important so that it does not infringe any on-going investigations or identity is crucial. Moreover, a minimal ethic issue, still too consider, would be for the researcher remain neutral throughout the research. As a student of the Justice Institute of British Columbia, there is high potential for the researcher to contain biases toward being pro-law enforcement and solely focusing on the law enforcement aspect rather than other aspects, like health, to the fentanyl-related crisis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an overabundance of information and data was collected from academic literature, quantitative and qualitative data for this research project. The ongoing crisis has made fentanyl as central issue in Canadian society which has shifted the focuses and mandates of first responders, particularly law enforcement. The purpose of this research was uncover areas relating to drug trafficking and drug investigations so that they can be addressed and enhanced to help police reduce the amount of fentanyl being sold on the street. The academic literature explained that there were main themes throughout such as the reverse control theory, drug dealers were becoming more technical and going online, in addition to, that more research was needed around fentanyl as a whole. With these core themes, they provided insight and understanding to the quantitative data from the BC Corner's Service and PRIME-BC as well as qualitative data from the RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, Government of Canada and Saanich Police. Based on the data collected and the finding from, there are a number of recommendations that can be provided to potentially enhance police strategies to reducing the amount of fentanyl on the streets. The research recommends:

- Eliminate all municipal drug enforcement units and create a province-wide drug enforcement unit that has jurisdiction of the whole province to investigate drug trafficking files to reduce the barrier and challenges of cross-jurisdictional investigations. Within that unit, have a dedicated specially trained task force strictly for online enforcement.

- Create a new province-wide drug intelligence database to reduce the time of transferring intelligence from one department to another and be easily accessible to every police agency within the province.
- Create a national pill-press registration, with special powers given to police to have the ability to obtain a search warrant for suspected unregistered pill-presses.
- Ban Bulk Imports at the border of chemicals used to buff fentanyl coming into the country.
- Create new legislation to restricting and enforcing online servers and databases used to buy illegal drugs coming into the Canada such as the TOR Network
- Invest additional money into more research around drug trafficking routes into Canada, such as online, ports, and border crossings, as well as how to maximize enforcement at the border while not impacting economic activity.

By implementing these six strategies, police can be better fitted to finding and reducing fentanyl on the streets, as well as be pro-active in enforcing any potential fentanyl coming into Canada. As the drug market continues to evolve over time, so does the ways in which police need to adapt to enforcing and reducing drugs on the streets. Unfortunately, as hard as police try, there will always to a way for drug dealers to get their illegal drugs out on the streets. As each and every day passes, new information becomes available to the fentanyl-crisis, which could be beneficial to reducing the amount of fentanyl on the streets. But for now, police continue to do their best, with what they have, for the ultimate goal of finding fentanyl and tragedies for families.

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