

This update has critical information for every crime laboratory director and medical examiner or coroner. The first meeting of the Forensic Laboratory Needs-Technology Working Group (FLN-TWG) happened October 2-3 in Washington D.C. The first meeting contained many briefings by our federal partners. They discussed items that might be of interest to state and local forensic science service providers and practitioners. As they spoke, I felt impressed to ask our communications committee to add a new section to our weekly "Crime Lab Minute" email. The new section will be the "Federal Corner" where information we are learning from our federal partners will be presented to our membership. The importance of the FLN-TWG cannot be overstated. The importance of the FLN-TWG members communicating the information we learn in those meetings with our membership is critical. It is my personal commitment to our membership that as long as I sit as a member on the FLN-TWG or participate on the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations, that the new "Federal Corner" in the CLM will be populated with valuable information and updated regularly.

### Update on DEA Programs

**Expansion of the NFLIS Program for Toxicology and ME/Coroners** The DEA is expanding the NFLIS program to include (A) medical examiner and coroner office (NFLIS-MEC) data regarding deaths in which drugs were identified and (B) public and private toxicology laboratory (NFLIS-Tox) data on toxicology findings from antemortem testing. These two continuous data collection programs complement NFLIS-Drug and further support the DEA's drug regulatory and scheduling efforts. If you are interested in joining NFLIS-TOX or NFLIS-MEC, contact the administrators at [DEA-NFLIS-MEC@rti.org](mailto:DEA-NFLIS-MEC@rti.org) or [DEA-NFLIS-TOX@rti.org](mailto:DEA-NFLIS-TOX@rti.org)

**Emerging Trends Program** - The Emerging Trends Program (ETP) produces a quarterly report from archived seizure and analysis information from drug evidence analyzed by DEA's laboratory system. This report provides a snapshot of the new psychoactive substance (NPS) market in the United States. This report is disseminated through multiple email listservs reaching thousands of practitioners throughout the world and is posted to the National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) website. The data is used across various disciplines and practitioners including forensic chemists, toxicologists, medical examiners, policy makers, educators, and epidemiologists. The ETP provides expert technical assistance to state and local forensic laboratories in the interpretation of data, structural elucidation, and identification of NPS including opioid related compounds.

**Reference Materials Program** – The Reference Materials Program (RMP) for DEA is centralized at the Special Testing and Research Laboratory. This group of chemists specialize in the authentication, structural elucidation, and synthesis of drug reference materials. The program has one of the largest inventory of drug reference materials, which includes many materials that are not available from commercial vendors or are too expensive for smaller laboratories to purchase. DEA RMP provides some of these difficult to obtain reference materials, including many synthetic opioids, to state and local laboratories for their analyses. The data generated by these materials are published in the SWGDRUG Drug Monographs and in Mass Spectral and FTIR Instrumental Libraries which are resources provided to forensic laboratories throughout the world.

**Real-time Network:** The DEA Synthetic Opioids Real-Time Communication Network connects forensic chemists, toxicologists, coroners, medical examiners, and other stakeholders to address the analytical challenges associated with emerging and novel synthetic opioids. Through this growing network of members from across the United States and internationally, scientific data and analytical approaches are being shared for the detection and identification of synthetic opioids many of which are structurally similar substances. The collective scientific expertise across the various disciplines is a powerful tool in overcoming the analytical difficulties associated with new emerging compounds as they are being analyzed. Current membership includes an estimated 160 members from across the country and internationally.

**Fentanyl Signature Profiling Program (FSPP):** FSPP generates scientifically-based investigative leads for DEA special agents. Since FSPP was initiated, 64 sets of seizure linkages have been made. The program has actively involved state and local agencies in the effort to answer key questions regarding the illicit fentanyl market (wholesale to street-level distribution) and has analyzed material representative of over 560 kg of seized fentanyl.

## **DEA Resources**

**SWGDRUG MS Database:** DEA has posted over 2850 scientific data files on the SWGDRUG website ([www.swgdrug.org](http://www.swgdrug.org)) for download and use by laboratory analysts throughout the world to assist with the identification of unknown substances.

**SWGDRUG IR Library:** DEA has posted over 500 scientific data files on the SWGDRUG website for download and use by laboratory analysts throughout the world to assist with the identification of unknown substances.

**SWGDRUG Drug Monographs:** DEA has posted more than 415 drug monographs containing detailed information and verified analytical data for use in verification of acquired reference standards.

Information on being added to the Real-Time Network and other DEA initiatives can be found at <https://www.ascld.org/opioid-resources/> State and local chemists can request reference materials and training by contacting [DEALabRefMaterials@usdoj.gov](mailto:DEALabRefMaterials@usdoj.gov) or [DEA.Emerging.Trends@usdoj.gov](mailto:DEA.Emerging.Trends@usdoj.gov)

## **Update on Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Programs**

The US Customs and Border Protection has alerted ASCLD to a monthly phone call about drugs being seen by CBP. As CBP provides a first line of defense for the United States, these calls present early warnings of what might be coming to state and local crime labs. This teleconference is called the Scientific Trends Online Network Exchange (STONE) and is organized through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) network. The goal of the teleconference is for the forensic community of chemists, toxicologist, medical examiners, etc., with a law enforcement nexus to call in to hear about what is being seen regionally or nationally. Federal, state, local, tribal, and international participants with a law enforcement nexus are invited to attend. Requests to join the STONE call have to be cleared through Mike Snyders of the HIDTA. Again, participants need a law enforcement nexus. Mike can be reached at [mrsnyders@nhac.org](mailto:mrsnyders@nhac.org) The presenter on the STONE call is Dr. Mike McCormick, Science Officer, Laboratories & Scientific Services Directorate US Customs and Border Protection. Mike McCormick can be reached at [Michael.M.McCormick@dhs.gov](mailto:Michael.M.McCormick@dhs.gov)

## **Update on the HIDTA**

ASCLD is currently forming stronger bonds with the HIDTA and specifically the HIDTA National Emerging Trends Initiative. A meeting is being organized in Cleveland in November to discuss ASCLD/HIDTA partnership on emerging drug data sharing. The HIDTA produced a report on emerging drugs that can be accessed at <http://gnoddrdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-NETI-Report-Public.pdf> More information on this emerging partnership will be presented soon.

## Update on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at the US Department of Transportation (USDOT)

NHTSA has a working group evaluating the existing *Recommendations for Toxicological Investigation of Drug-Impaired Driving and Motor Vehicle Fatalities*. The working group is going to put out the existing recommendations (*Journal of Analytical Toxicology*, 2018; 42: 63-68 <https://academic.oup.com/jat/article/42/2/63/4653729>) for public comment and possible federal endorsement, and work on related data collection issues. Questions should be addressed to Randolph Atkins at NHTSA. The distinguished panel of federal, state, and local practitioners working on this group are identified below:

### **Federal Government Members:**

NHTSA	Randolph Atkins, PhD, Office of Behavior Safety Research, Co-Chair
SAMHSA	Ron Flegel, BS, MT(ASCP), MS, Director, Division of Workplace Programs
ONDACP	Terry S. Zobeck, PhD, Associate Director, Office of Research and Data Analysis
CDC	Erin Sauber-Shatz, PhD, MPH, Transportation Safety Team Lead
NIDA	Steven Gust, PhD, Director, International Program
NHTSA	Marietta Bowen, Lead Program Analyst, FARS
NTSB	Jana Price

### **Non-Federal Members:**

Jennifer Harmon, Director, Orange County, CA Crime Lab, Co-Chair  
Barry Logan, PhD, F-ABFT, Sr. Vice President, NMS Labs  
Nicolas Lemos, BS, MS, PhD, Forensic Toxicology, University of California, San Francisco  
Tim Kerns, Database Engineer, University of Maryland  
Larry Holestine, Data Systems, Traffic Records Assessments  
Russ Martin, GHSA, Director of Government Relations  
Jennifer Limoges, New York State Police Forensic Investigation Center, Albany, NY  
Amy K. Miles, Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, Madison, WI  
Randall Beaty, Deputy Scientific Director, Texas Dept. of Public Safety, P.O. Box 4087, Austin TX  
Robert D. Johnson, PhD, Chief Toxicologist, Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office, Fort Worth TX

## Update on the Centers for Disease Control

A priority for me this year has been to establish a strong bond with the CDC. A great deal of federal funding is available to crime labs and medical examiners through CDC programs. In addition, the CDC is interested in working closely with ASCLD regarding data collection and sharing that will inform policy makers on morbidity and mortality data in the United States. Last week at the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) meeting in West Palm Beach Florida I met with several different units at CDC. We continued our great discussions on a number of topics from grant funding to data collection and sharing. In coming weeks, look for more information in the new "ASCLD CLM Federal Corner" directly from the CDC regarding grant funding opportunities and other initiatives ASCLD is working on with CDC.

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ASCLD President