

MAT Standards Learning System Webinar 9: Speaker Chat Question responses

Speakers from our last webinar session have kindly followed up and provided responses to questions and other points raised in the meeting chat which you can read below:

Post-Mortem Toxicology: Challenges in Detecting New Substances - Hazel Torrance Head of Forensic Toxicology Services, Scottish Police Authority

Q - Is there any theory regarding the decreasing use of cocaine in young people and increase in use in older people? Are the older age group now using potentially the same group who were using when they were younger and have reached an older age?

A - I would suggest the increase in older people is because the already aging heroin using population have added cocaine into their mix of drugs they are taking. But I don't have any empirical evidence to back up that assertion.

Q - Is there any predominant age group(s) using meth / Ketamine? More specifically in deaths and tox testing?

A - I've had a look at the Methamphetamine positives and it's spread pretty evenly between 20 and 70 years. The Ketamine + Cocaine positive fatalities (which hopefully removes the majority of hospital administered Ketamine) broken down by age group are below:

Years old	Total Number of Fatalities
<=20	8
21-30	18
31-40	15
41-50	14
51-60	6
61-70	1
71-80	0

Q - We have had people list kratom as a substance they are using, is this tested?

A - We have picked this up before in our "unknown" screening, but we don't look for it specifically at the moment. If it was present at a significant concentration, I think we would see it.

Q - Any observations on higher-than-expected levels of methadone?

A - It's difficult to interpret absolute methadone concentrations in postmortem blood, due to individual prescription doses and circumstances surrounding deaths which may impact on the concentration we determine. This is why we generally don't give out concentrations to people who don't have the knowledge of all the caveats, some of which I listed in my "Challenges.." slide.

Q - So, it is showing that the accumulation of substances is overwhelming the respiratory system? are we a part of that problem by overprescribing suppressants?

A - I guess this would depend on how much of the drugs found in fatalities are prescribed and how much are illicitly sought. There is also a question re. what will people seek out if they are not prescribed appropriate drugs?