# Emerging Highly Potent Substances in Philadelphia's Illicit Drug Supply Spark Opioid Crisis Concerns



A series of developments in the opioid crisis has emerged in Philadelphia and surrounding areas, revealing the presence of highly potent substances in the illicit drug supply. In Montgomery County, a recent overdose death involved a nitazene analogue, a synthetic opioid up to 40 times more potent than fentanyl. Philadelphia has also reported at least five nitazene-related deaths over the past two years.

Additionally, the animal tranquilizer xylazine, also known as "tranq," has been increasingly found in Philadelphia's drug supply, leading to severe medical issues such as intense blackouts and unhealing skin wounds. Xylazine's sedative effects complicate overdose treatments, as naloxone, typically used to reverse opioid overdoses, is ineffective against it.

Recently, medetomidine, another veterinary sedative, has been detected in drug samples in Philadelphia. Medetomidine was found in two drug samples and several patients exhibited symptoms consistent with its use, including prolonged sedation, low heart rate, and low blood pressure.

Philadelphia's health department has issued warnings for both physicians and the public to stay informed about these emerging drugs. The presence of these substances highlights ongoing changes in the illicit drug market and underscores the need for continuous monitoring and awareness.