BS4   The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Responds to the Opioid Crisis

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to describe how the AAFS responded to the impact of the ongoing opioid crisis on the forensic sciences by creating a presidential committee to align the efforts of the AAFS sections impacted by the workload, resulting in the increase in forensic examinations related to the investigation of opioid-related crimes and fatalities.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating a key role for the AAFS in coordinating the community's response to external events that impact the profession. Specifically, this presentation will demonstrate that AAFS members and the organization have played a role in developing and implementing strategies designed to counter the effects of the opioid crisis on the practice of forensic science.

The AAFS Ad Hoc Committee on Synthetic Opioids was established in 2017 in an effort to evaluate the multidisciplinary effects of the opioid crisis on the forensic sciences. The members of the committee represent the most impacted disciplines and their unique perspectives are used to increase awareness and better our understanding of the opioid crisis in the fields of criminalistics, forensic pathology, toxicology, and pharmacology.

In the past year, synthetic opioid-related non-fatal and fatal overdoses have continued to increase, specifically those associated with fentanyl analogs. This fentanyl threat is multi-faceted and requires the collaborative efforts of various forensic disciplines, including chemistry, pathology, and toxicology. In a collective effort, the AAFS Ad Hoc Committee on Synthetic Opioids has created four subcommittees to gather diverse resources and focus them in a coordinated and targeted approach. Experts will provide an update on the four subcommittees as well as share their experiences and perspectives. The subcommittees are: (1) the Advocacy Subcommittee which tracks congressional legislation and budget proposals that would influence the forensic sciences related to the opioid crisis; (2) the Information-Sharing Subcommittee which acts as a clearinghouse for the activities of various allied professional organizations, including the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO), the American Association of Crime Lab Directors (ASCLD), and others; (3) the AAFS-Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Seized Drugs (SWGDRUG) Resource Landing Page Subcommittee which works to identify and list valuable resources that can be linked to the AAFS-SWGDRUG Landing Page and used by the forensic community in their efforts to combat the opioid epidemic in the United States; and (4) the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standard Practice Subcommittee which has identified a need for standards that would help forensic practitioners (federal, state, local, and private) overcome the analytical challenges associated with the detection, identification, and reporting of novel and emerging opioids. The group seeks to work with ASTM and other organizations in creating standards that provide guidelines for the analysis of opioids, as well as a standard for naming these novel and emerging substances.

This breakfast session will highlight the activities of the AAFS Ad Hoc Committee on Synthetic Opioids with a focus on sharing identified resources, solutions, and best practices with the AAFS membership.

Synthetic Opioids, Fentanyl Analogs, Legislation