

During pandemic lockdown, overdoses increased

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Public health reports coincide

"Covid has had a huge impact on substance use because it has led to more isolation," John Moses, team leader for harm-reduction services at the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department. "I have a feeling that we are seeing a lot more people relapse and go back to using again. I think that people who may be work full time and only did drugs on the weekend were laid off and now may be doing drugs seven days a week. We know that when people are isolated like that, there is a lot more depression and that always has an effect on drug use."

Moses said his county is on pace to equal the number of overdose deaths in 2017, which were the most ever. "Last year Lexington-Fayette County had a total of 122 overdose deaths; we are already at 107 for the year," he said. "Last year we did a really good job of getting the overdose rates down, but thanks to covid, I believe that we are seeing more overdose deaths."

Moses also noted that anytime there is an interruption in the drug supply, which has been seen during the pandemic, more fentanyl comes into the community. He said it is being mixed in with heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and even THC vape cartridges, and "This disruption in the drug supply has caused more fentanyl to be here, and more overdoses."

Christie Green, public-health director of the Manchester-based Cumberland Valley District Health Department, said she had heard anecdotally that there were several overdoses about three weeks ago related to a batch of pressed pills that were being sold as Xanax, but were mostly fentanyl -- a synthetic opioid that is much stronger than heroin.

"This is the first time that I've gone through something that is socially stressful like covid . . . while working so closely with people who are active in substance-use disorder, and it's just been really hard on them," Green said. "A lot of their social supports are gone. I really worry about them, honestly."

Marcy Rein, public-health director of the Whitley County Health Department, said her health department signed up for a system called ODMAP in May to track overdoses in the community, along with about 40 other counties and health departments in the state.

"The system allows us to look at the big picture, to look at the maps to see if we have hotspots in a particular area or not," she said. She said a rash of overdoses in May prompted them to join the system.

Rein said preliminary data shows that the pandemic is having an impact on rates of suspected overdoses: "We're not saying that covid causes the increase in overdoses, but certainly some of the factors that go along with covid most certainly put people at higher risk, like the isolation and also the economic impact."

Andrea Brown, public-health director of the Bourbon County Health Department, said it saw an increase in overdoses in April, and started keeping track of those numbers more diligently in May after signing up for ODMAP, which she said only records EMS-related encounters, at least for now.

She said the EMS-only data shows that from from May 5 to July 19, almost two and a half months, Bourbon County had 28 overdoses and five fatalities. Brown estimated that the county had 11 overdoses in April but wasn't sure how many died.

"We are still getting overdoses," she said. "I feel like last year we may have had 12 overdose deaths, something in that ballpark, so if we've already had five between May and July, then I think we are really, once the data actually comes out, we're probably going to see a much higher increase."

Brown said the health department's harm-reduction syringe exchange has been giving out more Narcan, which can block the effects of an overdose, "so I think the word on the street is probably getting around that there has been an increase of overdoses in our community. The Narcan is definitely a hot ticket item right now."

Jamey Whaley, harm-reduction and-peer support specialist with the Maysville-based Buffalo Trace District Health Department, said some of his syringe-exchange participants have reported an increase in overdoses where they have had to administer Narcan. He said he is also seeing people relapse and return to the program.

"I don't know if that's because of the covid and the mental-health side of it that has made them decide to go back to using," he

said. Scott Lockard, public health director at the Hazard-based Kentucky River District Health Department, said Eastern Kentucky has seen an influx of pressed tablets with fentanyl and carfentanyl, noting that Lee County saw a huge uptick in overdoses from a substance called "smurf dope" just a few weeks ago. WLEX-TV reported July 1 that smurf dope is a bright blue substance that is a mixture of methamphetamine or heroin and fentanyl.

"I think any time you see a different substance than what people normally utilize, there is an adjustment period in how they use it and the strength, the purity level of it when it is a fentanyl or carfentanyl," Lockard said. "If somebody has been abusing Suboxone, which is a pharmaceutical-grade substance, and then now they are dealing with these pressed tablets, that's where I think it increased a lot of the issues that we were seeing with the increase in overdoses."

He said anecdotally, based on what he hears from EMS, law enforcement and harm-reduction people, there have been fewer overdoses near the end of June and in July.

For help in finding treatment for substance-use disorder for yourself, a friend, or loved one, the state has a website: findhelp-nowky.org.

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New Drivers

Monday, July 28
Intermediate licenses
 Leah Horn, Caden Stewart, DeAnna Estes, Luke Fletcher, Christopher Fields, Lola Nieves,
Operator Permits
 Parker Mullen and Julia Hardy.

Brooklyn Kelly, Chelsea Riddell, Ana Mattingly, and Landyn Baskin.

Corona Virus on rise in both state, county

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 Powell County had reported 8 cases as of July 8. It jumped to 24 positives on July 18.

On Monday, 37 had tested positive in Powell County. Nineteen of those cases were active, while 18 have recovered.

Scam Pharmacist Sentenced

VETERANS POST by Freddy Groves

Most of us are locked down due to the coronavirus, but apparently the wheels of justice keep on turning.

A few months ago I wrote about a Houston pharmacist, his wife and their pal who scammed the government out of \$21 million in fake pharmacy orders. The guy and his wife have now been sentenced.

Their scam was to whip up medicinal creams and gels that they would mail to injured state and federal employees, then send the bill to the government after their pal created fake prescriptions. The feds got them for a laundry list of charges, including conspiracy to commit health care fraud, conspiracy to pay and receive kickbacks, 11 counts of health care fraud and three counts of wire fraud dating back to 2009. Many government departments were involved, including the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The pharmacist, age 75, won't see daylight again for 10 years, and he has to pay back \$12

million in cash and forfeiture. The wife, however, is somehow getting off light. She's 68 and has to pay back pay \$950,000 in restitution and forfeiture, but will serve a mere 30 days in home confinement.

How does that work, one wonders. Due to the pandemic, nobody is going out. Thirty days at home doesn't seem like much punishment since we're all doing it anyway. She pleaded guilty to one charge. Does that play into it, that she admitted her role? And did he get 10 years because he argued against the charges and tried to pass off the medications he was sending out as marketing materials. Then again, maybe her portion of the "forfeiture" had to do with giving up that (very) upscale house in Houston.

Their accomplice is still on the lam. Anoop Kumar Chaturvedi, age 48, is a legal permanent resident from India. The government wants to find him. If you know where he is, call the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Post Office at 1-888-877-7644.

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Police activity report

Brandy Gayle Freeman, 41, of Blakes Way, Irvine was charged Thursday, July 23 by IPD Detective Sam Hensley with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, first offense.

The detective was dispatched to the Main Street and River Drive area to investigate a driver possibly under the influence.

He followed the reported vehicle which indicated a turn into Liquor World. He said the vehicle was half in and half out of the lane. It also stopped for a few seconds.

The citation states that Hensley made contact with the driver on the Bypass near Stump Road.

Freeman reportedly failed field sobriety tests. Hensley said the results of her breathalyzer tests were .212.

On Monday, July 20, Irvine Officer Jason Conrad served a warrant for the parole board on **Dakota S. Harvey**, 25, of Broadway, Irvine.

Wednesday, July 22, Officer Conrad arrested **Rosie Cutlip Smith**, 56, of Cressy Road, Irvine for operating a vehicle with expired operators license, failure to produce insurance card, possession of a controlled substance, first degree and first offense (methamphetamine), and drug paraphernalia - buy/possess.

The citation states that Officer Conrad was behind Smith's vehicle on the Winchester Road. He observed the vehicle cross the center line at least three times.

During a search of the vehicle, the officer said he located a handbag which contained a crystal like substance, suspected to be methamphetamine. He also located a syringe in the back of the driver seat.

Ravenna Chief Ken White assisted Conrad at the scene.

Tabitha R. Smith, 36, of Crooked Creek Road, Irvine was charged Saturday, July 25 by Officer James Marshall with driving a motor vehicle while texting.

Deputy Chris Coffey had followed T. Smith's vehicle

across the Irvine bridge. He said her vehicle crossed into the westbound lane and almost hit a motorcycle head on.

When her vehicle was stopped, Smith admitted that she was texting.

Troy James Moore, 45, of Kirkland Avenue, Irvine was arrested Saturday, July 25 by Officer Marshall who charged Moore with alcohol intoxication in a public place and resisting arrest.

The officer said that Moore was manifestly drunk on Court Street of Irvine. He refused to put his feet in the patrol unit. Marshall said he tased Moore, and Deputy Coffey pulled him into the cruiser.

A criminal summons for harassment was served on Moore, as well as a bench warrant for failure to appear in Estill District Court.

Larry Hall, 28, of Ruby Lane, Irvine was arrested Tuesday, July 21 by Deputy Josh King. He was charged with menacing and second degree disorderly conduct.

King was dispatched to Hall's residence along with EMS. The citation states that Hall refused to go with EMS, and he had made several threats toward his mother.

It adds that he attempted to push his mother through the door and started numerous verbal altercations with her.

Donnie Johnson, 31, of Stacy Lane was arrested Monday, July 27 by Deputy King at a neighboring residence on Stacy Lane.

The deputy said he responded to the neighbor's residence for a possible burglary in progress. He located Johnson on the neighboring property, and the neighbor said that Johnson was not supposed to be there.

Johnson was charged with first degree criminal trespass.

Jobie A. Kirby, 37, of Riddle Clem Road, Irvine was arrested by Deputy Josh Rison on Monday, July 27. Kirby was charged with public intoxication of a controlled substance (excludes alcohol).

Deputy Rison was dis-

patched to Dawes Road to investigate a male who was yelling in the street.

When he arrived, he said Kirby was laying on the back of his vehicle and kicking his feet in the air. He appeared to be speaking to himself and sweating profusely.

Kirby reportedly admitted to the deputy that he had taken meth prior to seeing the deputy.

Michael Cornett, 32, and his sister, **Tisha Hix Cornett**, 36, both of 4670 Richmond Road, Irvine were arrested Friday, July 24 by Deputy Chris Coffey.

The citation states the siblings were arguing at their residence, and the deputy thought everything was settled. However, as he was leaving, he said the sister came back outside and said they were arguing again.

Michael Cornett was reportedly unsteady on his feet and admitted to drinking. He was charged with alcohol intoxication.

Tisha Cornett was charged with second degree disorderly conduct.

Timothy Coty McKinney, 32, of Red Bud Road, Irvine was arrested Saturday, July 25 on Williams Road, Irvine by Deputy Coffey.

Deputy Coffey said he received a call that a man was slumped over in the driver seat of a vehicle. He added that he observed McKinney's wallet underneath his leg and a small plastic bag with a yellow rolled up piece of paper in

it. He said McKinney started to grab his wallet and baggie, but Coffey said he reached in and detained the male.

The citation says that inside the yellow paper was a crystal white powdery substance, suspected to be heroin. It adds that Coffey also located a tube with the powdery substance inside it and a scale.

Deputy Coffey said McKinney told him the powdery substance was gold dust, like a lucky charm.

McKinney was charged with possession of a controlled substance, first degree and first offense (heroin), drug paraphernalia - buy/possess, and public intoxication of a controlled substance (excluding alcohol).

Cody Norton, 26, of Stacy Lane, Irvine was arrested Sunday, July 26 by Deputy King.

The deputy said that he and Irvine Officer Conrad received a tip on a stolen vehicle at Stacy Lane Apartments. When they arrived, they found Norton pulling a black 2005 Kia Spectra into a parking space.

During a search, the citation states the officers found a dollar bill that contained a blue colored powder substance, which tested positive for fentanyl.

McKinney was charged with possession of a controlled substance, first degree and first offense, and driving on a DUI suspended license - first offense.

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