

Clinical Update: Xylazine

Introduction

Much has been written lately on the topic of Xylazine, and, as your trusted laboratory partner, we would like to share current scientific information. As always, if you would like to consult with one of our technical directors for an individual discussion, please do not hesitate to contact our clinical drug testing support line at 877-474-5767.

Xylazine is a non-opiate drug used in veterinary medicine as an animal sedative with muscle relaxant and analgesic properties. There is currently no human-approved use for xylazine. With similar sedative effects as opioids, xylazine has become increasingly detected in the illicit drug supply. It is commonly encountered in combination with fentanyl, but has also been detected in mixtures containing cocaine, heroin and a variety of other drugs.

Clinical details

As testing for xylazine is unlikely to be available in acute situations, the following clinical information is of particular note:

- Signs and symptoms of acute xylazine toxicity are similar to those of opioid intoxication, but naloxone is not effective in reversing xylazine overdose. Healthcare professionals should consider potential xylazine exposure when patients present with an overdose that does not respond to naloxone. Appropriate supportive measures should be provided to patients with opioid-like toxidrome who do not respond to naloxone.
- Xylazine exposure should be considered when managing opioid overdoses and when other signs or symptoms (CNS and respiratory depression, hypotension, bradycardia, hypothermia, miosis, elevated blood glucose, skin ulcerations) of xylazine exposure are present. Even if testing is available, xylazine is rapidly eliminated and has a short detection window, which may lead to underdiagnosis.
- Individuals with repeated xylazine exposure may become dependent and experience severe withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal from xylazine is not managed by standard medication assisted treatment with methadone, buprenorphine or naltrexone. Healthcare professionals caring for patients with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) should monitor patients for withdrawal symptoms that are not managed by traditional OUD treatments, as this may indicate xylazine withdrawal.

Testing options

Labcorp expanded its synthetic opioids panel earlier this year with additional analytes to include xylazine:

Test No.	Test Name	Test Includes
703025	Synthetic Opioids, Screen With Reflexed Confirmation, Urine	Fentanyl, Acetyl fentanyl, Norfentanyl, Acetyl Norfentanyl, Furanyl fentanyl, p-Fluorobutyrylfentanyl, Acrylfentanyl, Butyryl fentanyl, Carfentanil, 3-Methyl fentanyl, Valeryl fentanyl, Methoxyacetyl fentanyl, Cyclopropyl fentanyl, Tetrahydrofuran fentanyl, Phenylacetyl fentanyl, p-Fluoro cyclopropyl fentanyl, MT-45, Butyryl fentanyl carboxy metabolite, Isotonitazine, Metonitazene, Acetylfentanyl-4-methylphenethyl, Ocfentanil, p-Fluorofentanyl, 4-Methoxybutyryl fentanyl, AH-7921, U-47700, AH-8533, AH-8529, IC-26, B-Hydroxythiofentanyl, Norcarfentanil, Xylazine, 4-Hydroxy xylazine, Methoxyacetyl Norfentanyl, Mitragynine, 7-OH-mitragynine

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Conclusions

Our findings are consistent with Food and Drug Administration reports in that xylazine has been observed almost exclusively in the presence of other drugs of abuse, especially fentanyl, and is rarely detected alone.

Due to the rapidly changing nature of the illicit drug trade, we offer our designer drug tests as standalone panels as opposed to including in a base urine drug panel. This practice allows for maximal provider and laboratory flexibility in pursuing individualized patient needs and compliance with medical necessity guidelines in an ever-evolving illicit drug marketplace.

For additional information please visit our online Test Menu www.labcorp.com or contact your local Labcorp sales representative.