

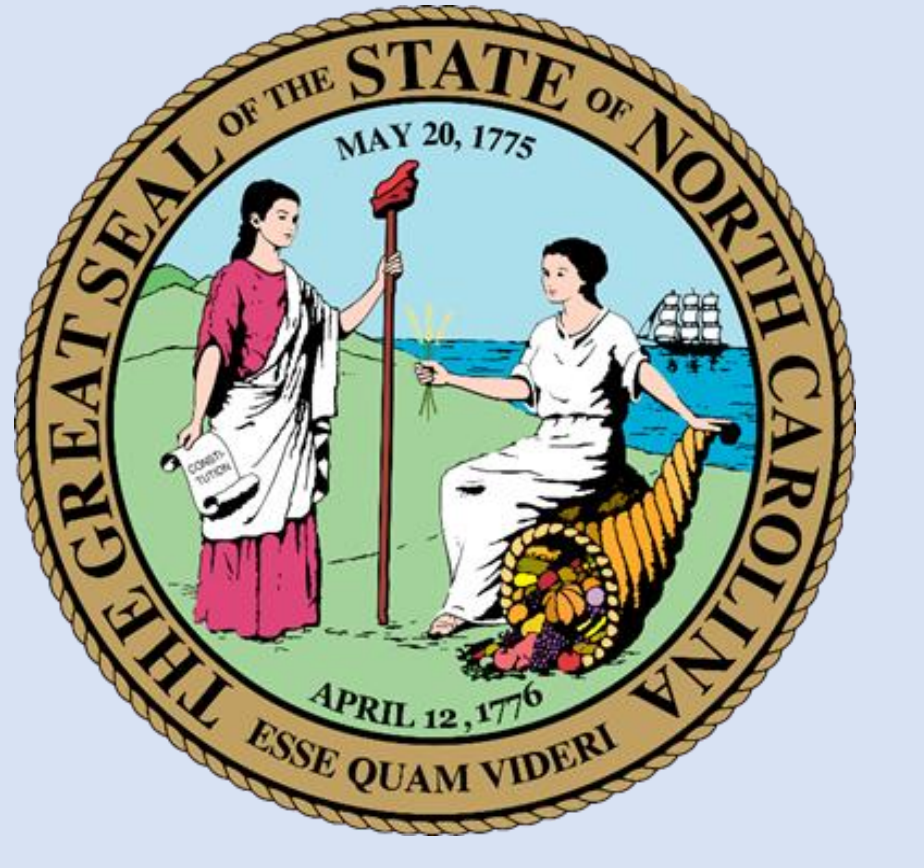


North Carolina Counterfeit Pill Involved Deaths, 2020-Present

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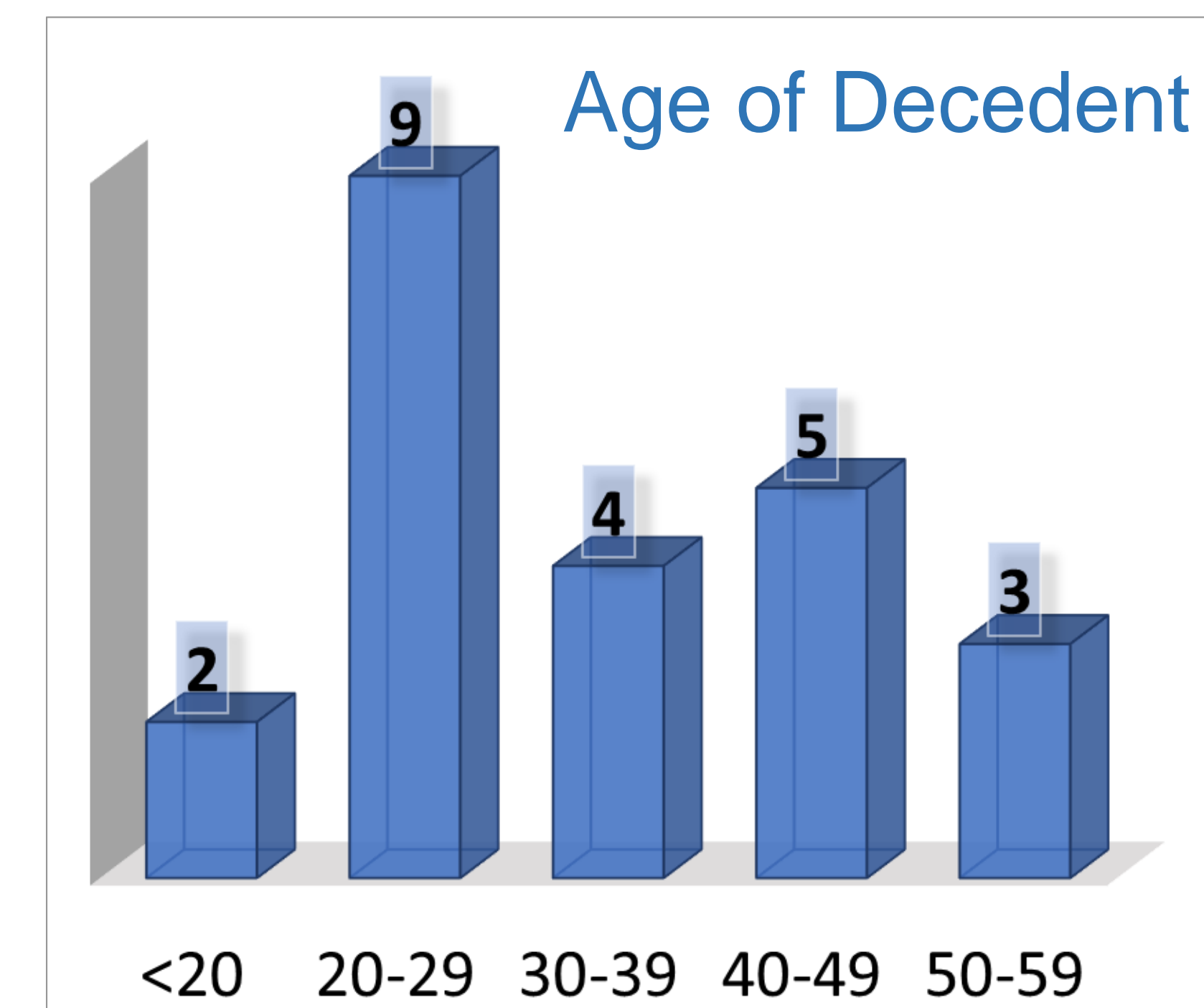
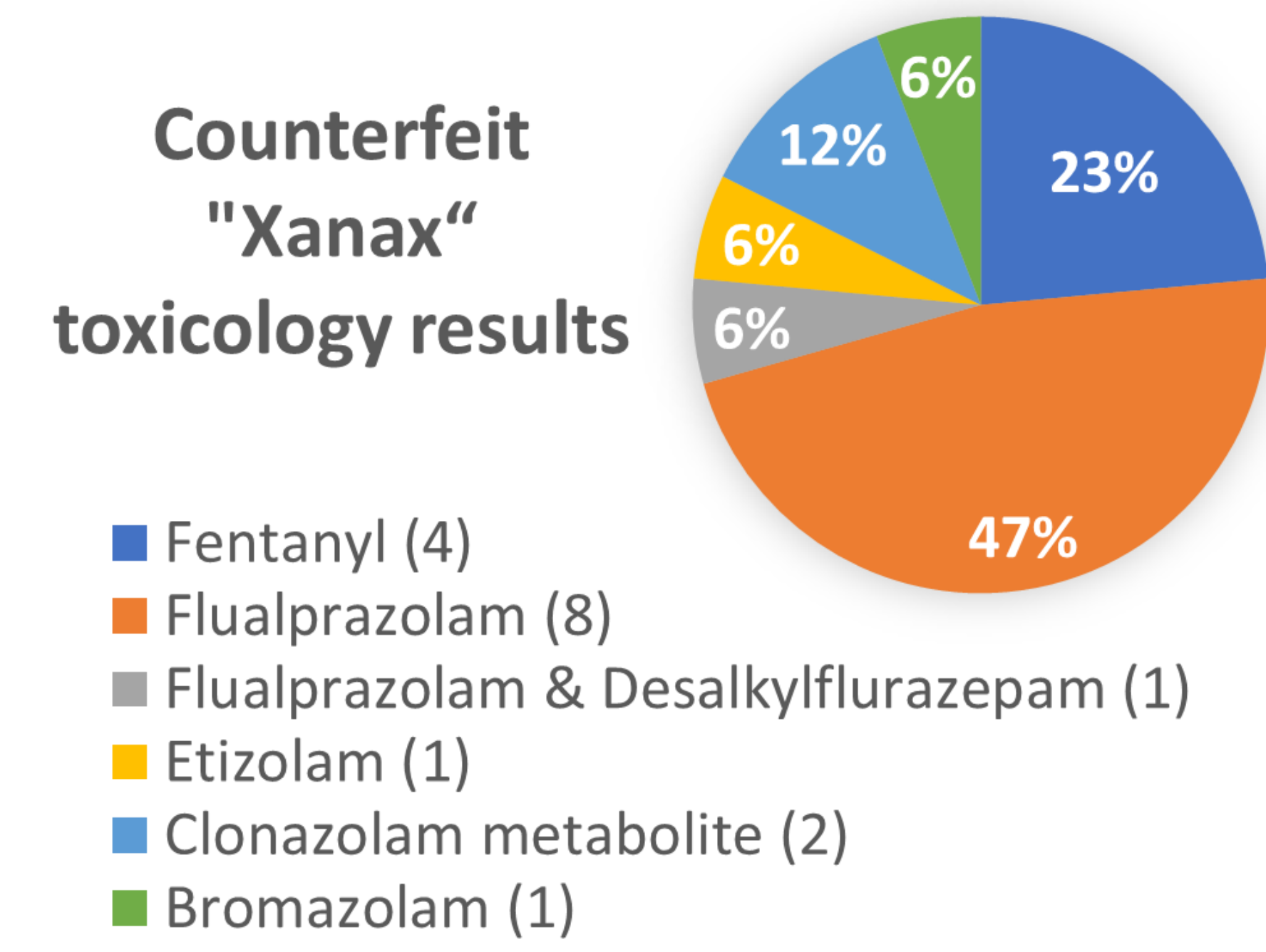
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Background

Counterfeit medication is a public health concern. This data set includes 23 postmortem cases with a strong case history indicating prescription drug use and toxicological results which indicated likely presence of **counterfeit pills**. Of the included cases, **alprazolam (Xanax)** was expected in 17, and **oxycodone (Percocet, Roxicodone)** was expected in 6. Postmortem toxicology found no reportable value of the expected medication in any of the decedents and in most instances contained either a **novel psychoactive substance (NPS)** or **fentanyl**. Demographics varied widely, indicating the diversity and prevalence of this issue. Ages ranged from 17-57, 65% were white, 22% were black, and 13% were multi-racial. Sixty-one percent had a recorded history of substance use disorder. All the NPS benzodiazepines found in the counterfeit pills had a first detection of the substance at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner occurring within the last 5 years.

Counterfeit "Xanax" toxicology results



Novel Psychoactive Substance NC OCME (Date of Death)*

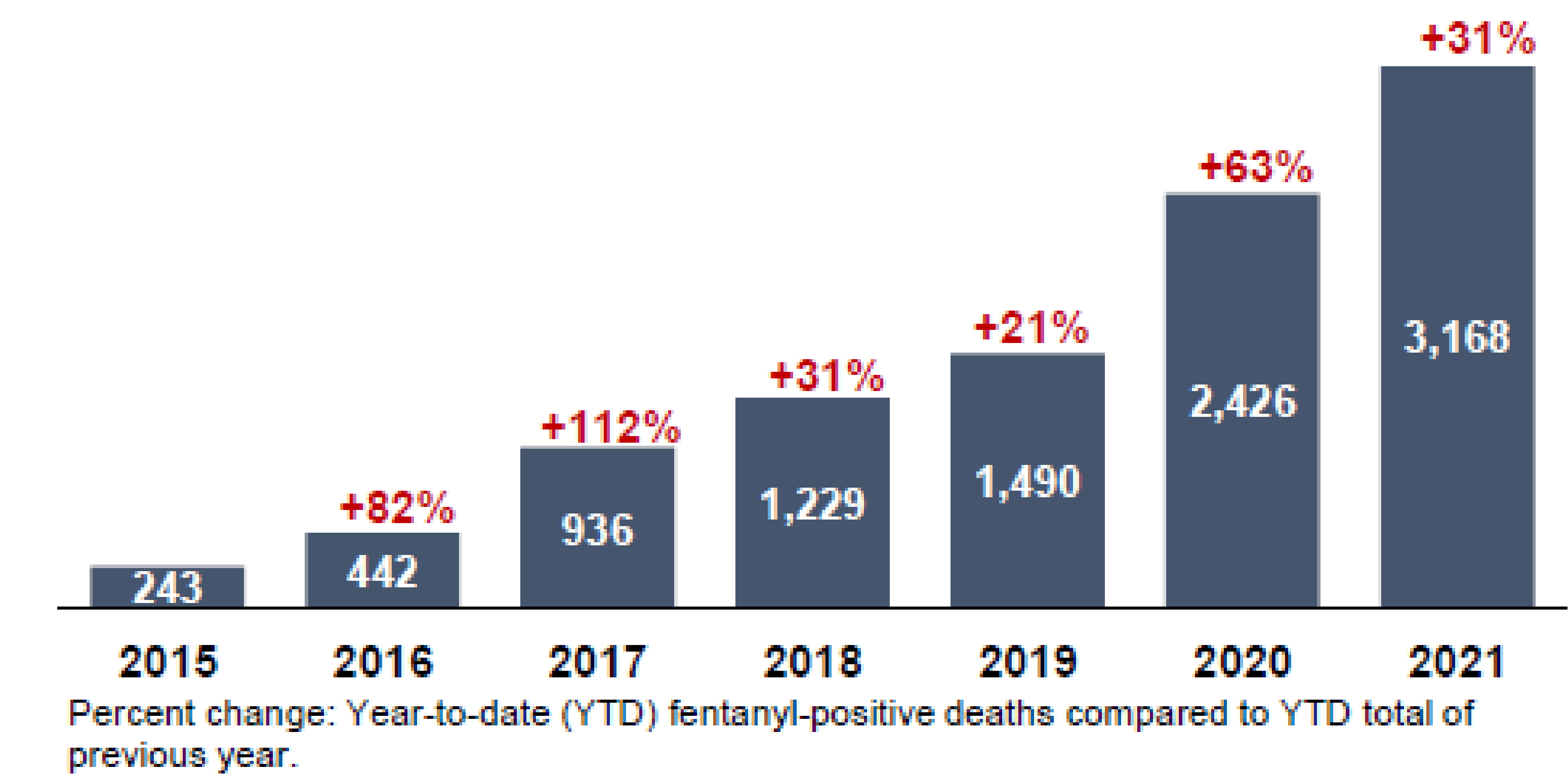
Clonazolam/ 8-Aminoclonazolam	2/26/2017
Etizolam	4/25/2017
Desalkylflurazepam	6/18/2019
Flualprazolam	1/12/2020
Bromazolam	5/20/2021

*First detected in a North Carolina death, not necessarily in counterfeit pill form



Can you spot the fake Xanax?

Fentanyl-Positive Deaths: 2015-2021^*



COUNTERFEIT DRUGS



SOURCE: DEA

Age/Sex, County, M/YY Investigation/Scene Findings

40/M, Cumberland, 5/20	Per son, a friend gave him two 30mg Roxicodone tablets on the day of his death, which he crushed and snorted.
48/M, Mecklenburg, 5/21	He and friend took ½ Percocet each and both collapsed. Friend collapsed while law enforcement was responding to decedent collapse. Friend survived.
33/F, Caldwell, 3/21	Text messages show her buying " Roxy 30s " from a friend she briefly visited right before death, per mother.
27/M, Mecklenburg, 6/20	Gave friend a Xanax and warned him to only take 1/4 bar, then put 4 Xanax bars in soda bottle. Friend felt unwell and went to ED for overdose, returned to find decedent deceased with half consumed soda bottle.
34/M, Guilford, 9/21	Girlfriend stated he bought 1 Xanax from friend, took 1/2-1 pill, became unresponsive.
57/M, Buncombe, 8/20	Found w/ baggie of Xanax bars, history of clonazepam abuse, recent divorce.
49/M, Guilford, 6/20	Girlfriend witnessed Xanax bar use day of death.
19/F, Guilford, 5/20	Friend reported decedent took ecstasy & less than ½ of a bar of Xanax .
17/M, Cumberland, 8/21	Friends witnessed him take up to 8 Xanax bars and pass out in the back seat of car.
57/M, New Hanover, 2/22	Suicide note said took "22 Xanax "
22/M, Mecklenburg, 9/21	Found on floor of substance recovery house, Xanax bar pills located near decedent.
46/F, Forsyth, 8/21	Cut up bar of alprazolam found in bathroom- tested by North Carolina OCME and found to be flualprazolam. History of substance abuse, prescribed suboxone, straws found in home.
52/F, Rockingham, 10/20	Xanax on scene that was prescribed to her, but in excess of fill amount. 40-50 oxycodone in purse not prescribed to decedent.
39/M, Davidson, 5/20	Got Xanax and heroin with a friend and snorted it. Released from rehab 2 weeks ago.

A-Aortic, F-Femoral, I-Iliac, P-Antemortem Peripheral, V-Vena cava, S-Subclavian, OCME-Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Confirmed Toxicology Results

Fentanyl 3.6 mg/L (I), Bupropion present (A), Threo Bupropion < 0.25 mg/L (A), Metoprolol present (A), Naloxone present (A)
Fentanyl 8.7 ng/mL (P), Ethanol 170 mg/dL (P), Naloxone present (P)
Fentanyl 17 ng/mL (F), Ethanol 70 mg/dL (A), Naloxone present (A)
Fentanyl 20 ng/mL (I), Methamphetamine 1.9 mg/L (I), Benzoylcegonine 0.35 mg/L (I), Amphetamine 0.19 mg/L (I)
Fentanyl 3.1 ng/mL (F)
Fentanyl 18 ng/mL (F), Methamphetamine 0.40 mg/L (F), Bupropion 0.074 mg/L (F), Hydroxybupropion 0.087 mg/L (F)
Etizolam 0.027 mg/L (F), Oxycodone 0.091 mg/L (F), Gabapentin 20 mg/L (F), Oxymorphone < 0.005 mg/L (F)
Flualprazolam present (F), Eutylone present (F), Methamphetamine 0.25mg/L (V), Naloxone present (V)
8-Aminoclonazolam present (F)
Bromazolam present (I)
Flualprazolam 0.033 mg/L (I), Desalkylflurazepam present (A), Mitragynine 0.25 mg/L (I), 7-Hydroxymitragynine < 0.020 mg/L (I)
Flualprazolam present (F), Buprenorphine 7.0 ng/mL (F), Norbup 12 ng/mL (F), Gabapentin 13 mg/L (F), Mirtazapine 1.7 mg/L (F)
Flualprazolam present (F), Oxycodone 0.030 mg/L (F), Gabapentin 45 mg/L (F), Trazodone < 0.50 mg/L (F)
Flualprazolam present (F), Fentanyl 53 ng/mL (F), Methamphetamine 0.25 mg/L (F)