

ASAM REVIEW COURSE 2023

Pharmacology and Toxicology: Principles, Applications, and Limitations

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Financial Disclosure

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, MBA, FASAM

- No relevant disclosures

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Learning Objectives

- Explain** the differences between and clinical relevance of tolerance, dependence, and hyperalgesia.
- Describe** the pharmacologic principles of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics and how each impacts addiction risk and addiction treatment.
- Discuss** the interpretation pitfalls of screening and confirmatory urine drug tests in the management of patients with substance use.

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Addiction Medicine IS Pharmacology

- Drugs have to get to the brain to elicit a response.
 - Blood brain barrier is an effective barricade
- The more rapidly the drugs reach the site of action the greater the reinforcement.
 - Dose and dose rate
 - Route of administration
 - Lipophilicity and other pharmacologic characteristics

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Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics

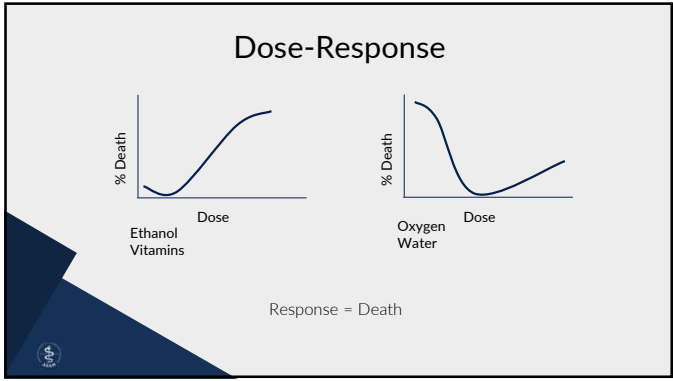
Absorption (Bioavailability)	Distribution	Elimination
Biotransformation	Dose Response (Clinical Effect)	Potency
Drug interaction	Tolerance	Dependence

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Dose-Response

Response = Anything (Blood pressure, Euphoria, Death)

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Potency

Rank order the potency at causing death:

Agent	LD50 (mg/kg)
Ethanol	5,000
Morphine	1
Nicotine	1
Botulinum	0.00001

Don't confuse potency with clinical effect

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Which has more potent THC?

1980's weed

4%THC

2020 weed

20%THC

Trick question:
The THC is the same potency
The higher concentration weed is more "potent"

Don't confuse potency of a drug with its concentration


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Potency doesn't really matter

Agent	Potency (vs morphine)
Tramadol	0.2
Morphine	1
Oxycodone	1.3
Methadone	4
Heroin	4
Buprenorphine	30
Fentanyl	100
Carfentanil	10,000

Any of these drugs will kill you if you take enough

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What is There That is Not Poison?

"What is there that is not poison? All things are poison and nothing [is] without poison. Solely the dose determines that a thing is not a poison"


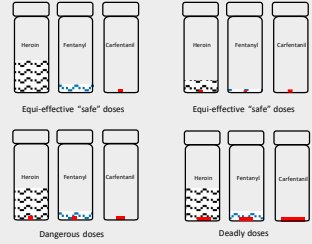
Paracelsus (1493-1541)
in *Third Defense*

"Dose Makes The Poison"

Philip Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim
aka PARACELUS (1493-1541)

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Potency doesn't really matter

Equi-effective "safe" doses

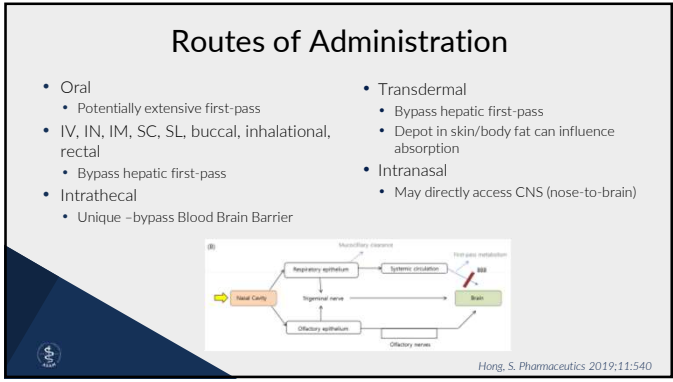
Dangerous doses

Deadly doses

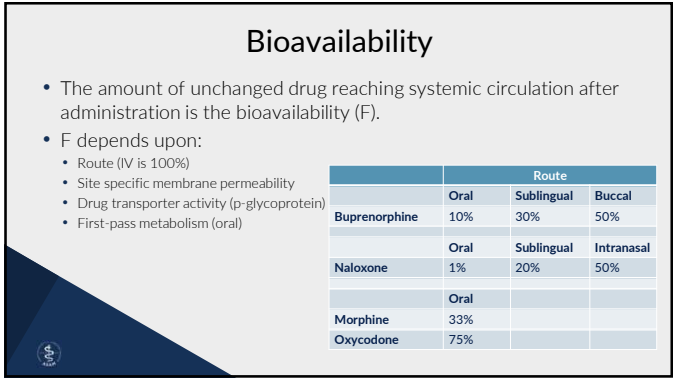
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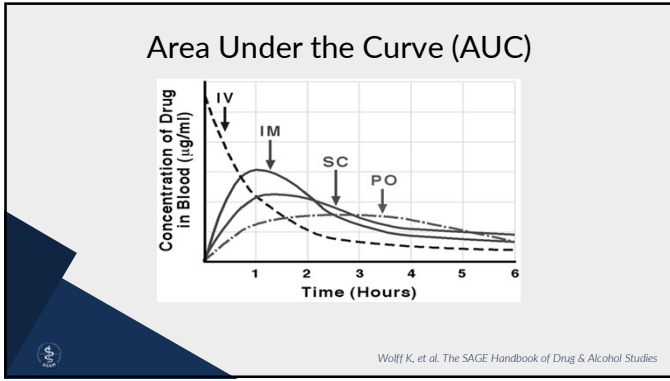
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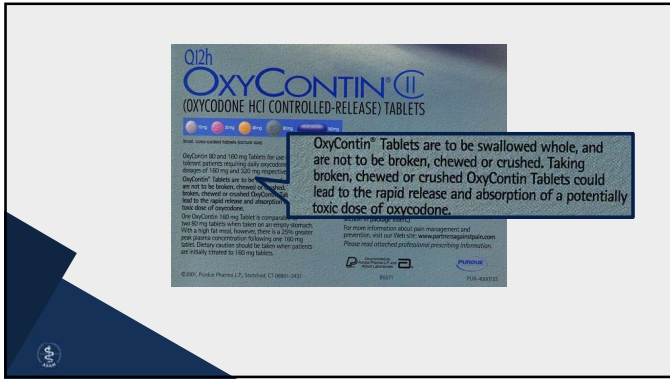
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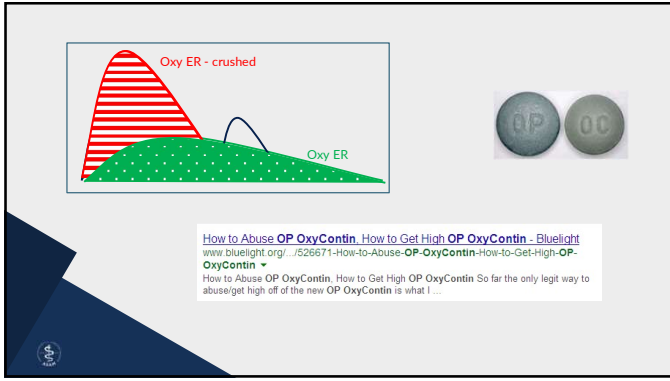
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Biotransformation

Phase 1

Lipophilic Drug/Chemical → Oxidation, Reduction, Hydrolysis → Metabolite

Phase 2

Metabolite → Conjugation, Sulfation, Glucuronidation → Conjugated metabolite

Water soluble

Ethanol Metabolism

$$\text{CH}_3-\text{CH}_2-\text{OH} + \text{H}^+ - \text{Co} \xrightarrow[\text{CYP2E1}]{\text{NADPH} \rightarrow \text{NADP}^+} \text{CH}_3-\text{C}=\text{O} + 2\text{H}_2\text{O} \quad \text{MEOS}$$

$$\text{CH}_3-\text{CH}_2-\text{OH} \xrightarrow[\text{Alcohol dehydrogenase}]{\text{NAD}^+ \rightarrow \text{NADH}} \text{CH}_3-\text{C}=\text{O} + \text{H}^+ \quad \text{Cytosol}$$

$$\text{CH}_3-\text{CH}_2-\text{OH} \xrightarrow[\text{Catalase}]{\text{H}_2\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{O}} \text{CH}_3-\text{C}=\text{O} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \quad \text{Peroxisome}$$

Goldfrank's Toxicologic Emergencies, 11th

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Activation through Biotransformation

- Codeine is demethylated in the liver to morphine
- Occurs via CYP2D6
- Codeine is a "pro-drug" (drug undergoes hepatic biotransformation or 'metabolism' to its active component)
- Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse™) is another example of a pro-drug

Fun pharm fact: heroin does not bind to the mu receptor. Metabolism occurs in the CSF.

Codeine

Morphine

Heroin

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Biotransformation

CYP Isozyme	P450	2D6	2C9	2C19	2D6	2E1	3A4
Percent of liver CYPs	4%–10%	2%–5%	5%–20%	1%–4%	1%–4%	4%–17%	15%–31%
Contribution to enterocyte CYPs	None	None	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	70%
Organs other than liver with enzyme	Lung	Kidney	Small intestine, nasal mucosa, heart	Small intestine, nasal mucosa, heart	Small intestine, kidney, lung, heart	Lung, small intestine, kidney	Much in small intestine; some in kidney, nasal mucosa, lung, stomach
Percent of metabolisms of typically used pharmaceuticals	9%	7%	13%	7%	20%	3%	32%
Polymorphism	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ethnic Frequency							
<i>Decreased Activity</i>							
African American	—	38%–62%	0%–3%	10%–17%	14%–30%	—	—
Asian	—	14%–25%	2%–8%	25%–39%	47%–56%	—	—
Caucasian	—	23%–39%	10%–23%	6%–16%	37%–45%	—	—
<i>Increased Activity</i>							
African American	—	0%–25%	—	15%–27%	—	—	—
Asian	—	0%–15%	—	0%–2%	1%	—	—
Caucasian	—	6%	—	21%–25%	1%–9%	—	—
Ethiopian	—	—	—	—	30%	—	—

¹¹Polymorphism is a genetic change that exists in at least 1% of the human population. Interpersonal allelic variations exist even in those listed as "No" for polymorphism.

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Biotransformation

TABLE 11-1 Characteristics of Different Cytochrome P450 Enzymes^{11,12,13}

	2B6	2C9	2C19	2D6	2E1	3A4
Prevalence	2%–5%	5%–29%	1%–4%	1%–4%	6%–17%	15%–37%
Genetically based alterations in gene product function.	None	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	70%
Site of biotransformation	Kidney	Small intestine, nasal mucosa, heart	Small intestine, nasal mucosa, heart	Small intestine, kidney, lung, heart	Lung, small intestine, kidney	Much in liver, also in placenta, lung, stomach
Percent of biotransformation typically used pharmacologically	7%	13%	7%	20%	3%	30%
Polymerphom	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Albetic Frequency						
Decreased Activity						
African American	—	38%–42%	—	—	—	—
Asian	—	14%–25%	—	—	—	—
Caucasian	—	23%–39%	—	—	—	—
Increased Activity						
African American	—	0%–25%	—	—	—	—
Asian	—	5%–15%	—	—	—	—
Caucasian	—	6%	—	—	—	—
Ethiopian	—	—	—	—	—	—

* Polymorphism is a genetic change that exists in at least 1% of the human population. Interpersonal allelic variations exist even in those listed as "No" for polymorphism.

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Genetically based alterations in gene product function.

Despite rare polymorphism, 3A4 is a major cause of drug interactions

Metadone

- Primarily responsible for metabolism
- Some HIV meds induce 3A4
- Variability (despite minimal polymorphism) complicates induction

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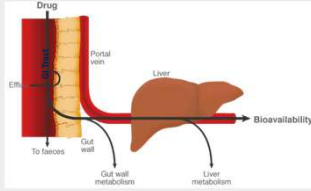
Distribution

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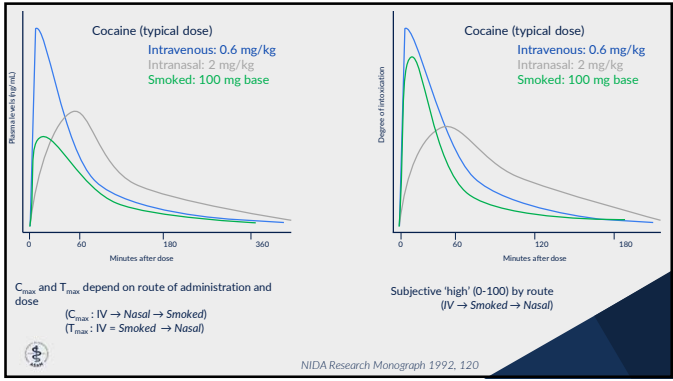
First Pass Hepatic Metabolism

Bypass first pass

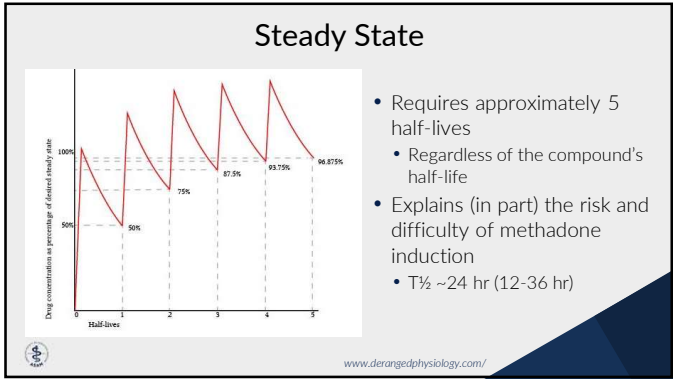



www.doctoralerts.com

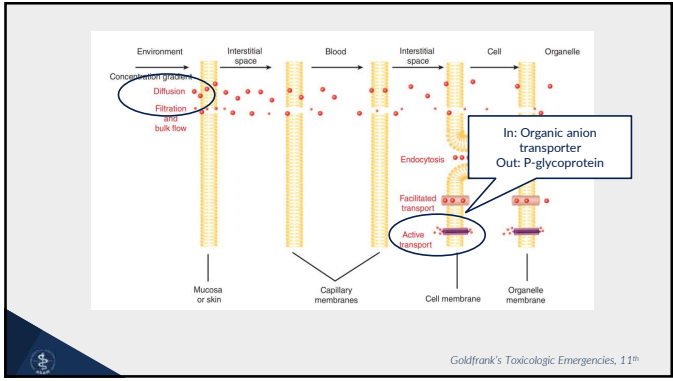
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Elimination

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T1/2 (Half-life) is The Time For Cmax to Fall by Half

The graph plots drug concentration as a percentage of Cmax against units of time. It shows a biphasic decay curve. The initial steep decline is labeled as the distribution half-life (t1/2α), and the final linear decline is labeled as the elimination half-life (t1/2β). Key points on the y-axis are 100%, 50%, and 12.5%.

- Distribution t_{1/2}
 - Redistribution t_{1/2}
- Terminal elimination t_{1/2}
 - Context sensitive t_{1/2}
 - Apparent t_{1/2}

Drug	Half life (distrib)	Half life (redistrib)	Half life (term)	LogP
Fentanyl	2 min	12 min	480 min	4.05
Methadone	120 min	---	1440 min	3.93

www.derangedphysiology.com/ Note: all half-lives have ranges, not shown

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Receptor Pharmacology

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Efficacy

Ligand	% Efficacy
Full agonist	E = 100
Partial agonist	0 < E < 100
Antagonist	E = 0
Inverse agonist	E < 0

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Affinity

Ligand	Ki (Affinity) (nmol)
Hydrocodone	41.58
Oxycodone	25.87
Heroin	9.6
Methadone	3.38
Fentanyl	1.35
Morphine	1.14
Naloxone	1.1
Hydromorphone	0.6
Buprenorphine	0.21

Volpe DA. Uniform assessment and ranking of opioid Mu receptor binding constants for selected opioid drugs. Reg Toxicol Pharmacol. 2011

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Receptor kinetics On-off

Occupation governed by affinity Activation governed by efficacy

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Pharmacodynamics

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Tolerance

- Tolerance is the reduction in response to a drug after its repeated administration
- Tolerance shifts the dose-response curve to the right
 - Higher doses than initial doses to achieve the same effect

Morphine (mg/kg)	Baseline	3.2 mg/kg/day	6.4 mg/kg/day	Abstinence
1	10	10	10	10
10	60	35	15	10
100	100	70	45	15

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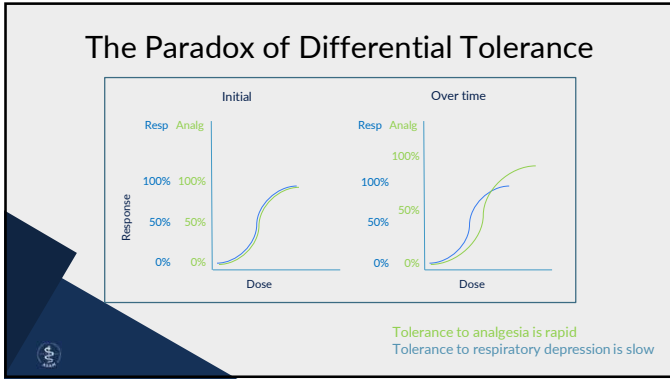
Differential Tolerance

Morphine (mg/kg)	Baseline	3.2 mg/kg/day	6.4 mg/kg/day	Abstinence
1	10	10	10	10
10	60	35	15	10
100	100	70	45	15

Morphine (mg/kg)	Baseline	3.2 mg/kg/day	6.4 mg/kg/day	Abstinence
1	100	100	100	100
10	40	50	60	100
100	15	25	35	100

Hayhurst. Anesthesiology 2016;124:483-8

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Pharmacokinetic Tolerance

- A consequence of increased metabolism after a drug is repeatedly administered
- Results in less drug being available at the receptor for drug activity.
- Ethanol
 - Although ADH is not inducible, CYP2E1 is
 - Accounts for more rapid elimination of alcohol in heavy, chronic users

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Pharmacodynamic Tolerance

- Down-regulation of receptors (higher drug concentration needed)
 - Desensitization of GABA (ethanol)
 - Receptor conformation
 - Desensitization of MOR (opioid)
 - Signal transduction
 - Decreased density (internalization)
- Up-regulation of receptors
 - Increased number of NMDA

Quantity	Ethanol status	Neuronal effect	Clinical effect
1	None color	Baseline inhibition	Baseline excitation
2	None	Enhanced inhibition	Blocked excitation
3	Tolerant	Downregulated receptor path	Upregulated receptor modulation
4	Alcoholism	Loss of inhibition	Unopposed excitation

Legend:
 - GABA receptor with Cl^- subunit
 - NMDA receptor
 - Ethanol

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Other Clinical Examples of Tolerance

- Mellanby effect
 - Less "intoxicated" on descending limb of BAC curve
- MDMA, psilocybin, and LSD
 - Serotonergic
- BZD resistant alcohol withdrawal from IV (not really PO) diazepam

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Conditioned Tolerance

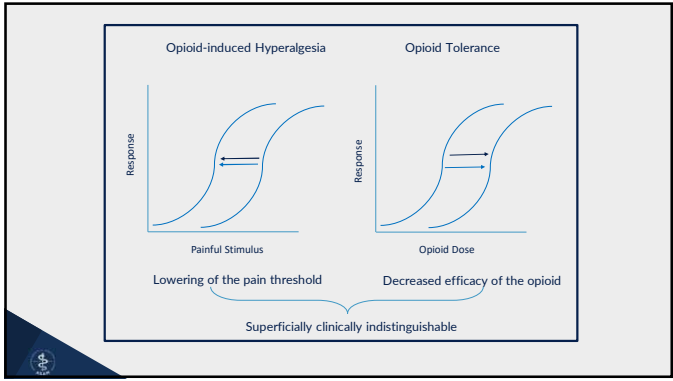
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Cross-Tolerance

- Tolerance to the repeated use of a specific drug in a given category is generalized to other drugs with the same structural or mechanistic category.

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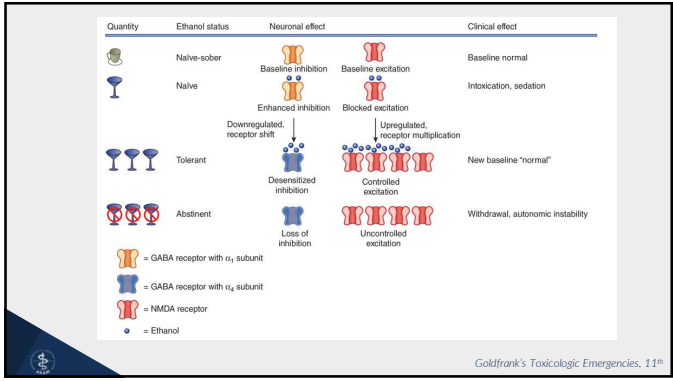


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Physical Dependence



- A state that develops as a result of adaptation and the resetting of homeostatic mechanisms
- Withdrawal syndrome can occur in physically dependent person when the drug is abruptly stopped or dose reduced
 - Typically improves on restarting the drug
 - Can be a "point of no-return"
- Can occur with both addictive and non-addictive use of drugs
 - Caffeine, nicotine
- And with therapeutic use
 - Clonidine

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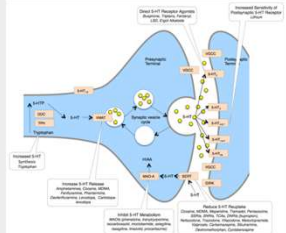
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Physiological Drug Interactions

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PK/PD Drug Interactions



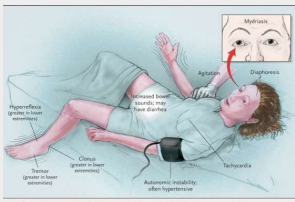





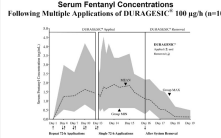
Figure 1. Findings in a Patient with Moderately Severe Serotonin Syndrome.
Hyperreflexia, characteristic finding of tremor or clonus and hyperreflexia should lead the clinician to consider the diagnosis of the serotonin syndrome.

www.real-psychiatry.blogspot.com
Boyer E. NEJM 2005

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Exposure Pathway

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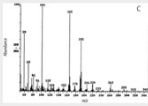
Philosophical Considerations (for substance use)

- Testing is not meant to "catch" the patient
 - Testing identifies recent use it does NOT identify addiction or impairment
 - A positive finding suggests need to review treatment plan
 - Not to prevent, limit, or punitively change treatment
- Tests must be interpreted in the context of patient self-report and other information from observed behaviors or reliable sources
- Language is important
 - e.g., clean vs dirty, pass/fail

The cartoon shows a doctor pointing at a man wearing a Pepsi shirt. The doctor says, "You're fired, Jack. The lab results just came back, and you tested positive for Coke." The man looks confused.

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Screening and Confirmatory Tests

	
	
<p>Screening (Presumptive) Assays - indicate the presumptive presence of drugs Highly sensitive Rapid, inexpensive Cutoff - Yes/No</p>	<p>Confirmatory (Definitive) Assays - specifically identify the drug detected in the screening assay Highly specific Quantitative Complicated, expensive</p>

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Screening Tests for Drugs of Abuse

- Enzyme immunoassay
 - Based on a substance's structure.
 - Relatively inexpensive, easily automated
- Analytical false positives are possible ("opiate" assay finds hydrocodone)
 - Confirm positive screens in some clinical situations (TBD shortly)
- Analytical false negatives are less common (assay completely misses an analyte)
 - Clinical false negatives occur (doesn't detect a non-morphine opioid)

02/28/2017 23:09 Amphetamines Urine N [Not Detect-] Final

Not Detected * Interpretive Data:
Drug Screen results are provided for medical management only. No chain of custody documentation. Testing does not meet NIDA standards. Positive results are not confirmed.

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"Drugs of Abuse" Screening

NIDA/SAMHSA 5

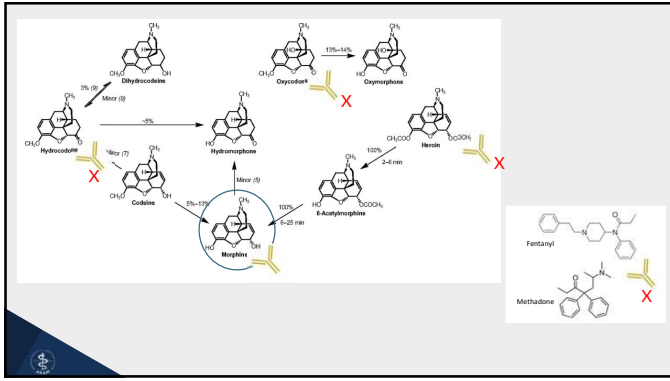
- Opiates
- Amphetamines
- Cocaine
- Marijuana
- Phencyclidine

NIDA-9 (Extended)

- Opiates
- Amphetamines
- Cocaine
- Marijuana
- Phencyclidine
- Barbiturates
- Benzodiazepines
- Methadone
- Propoxyphene

Analyte	Screen, ng/mL	Confirmatory, ng/mL
Opiates	2,000	2,000
Cannabinoid	50	15
Amphetamine	500	250
Cocaine	300	150
Phencyclidine	25	25

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Interpretation of a Negative Opioid Screen

- Patient is not using
 - Diversion away
- Clinical false negative
 - Collection/Lab error
 - Wrong assay used
 - e.g.: "Opiate" assay for oxycodone
 - Cutoffs are often used
 - Detection periods are short

Drug	Urine
Alcohol	12-14
Amphetamines	2-3
Benzodiazepines	1-3
Cocaine	2-4
Heroin	1-3
Marijuana	7-30
Opioids	2-7
Phenylbutazone	1-2
Propofol	1-2
Valium	1-2
Xanax	1-2

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The Gold Standards for Confirmation

- Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry
 - Gold standard for confirmation
 - Chemical "fingerprint" of drugs
 - Sensitive and specific
 - Legally defensible
- Liquid Chromatography/Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC/MS/MS)
 - Emerging Standard for Confirmation
 - Less sample preparation

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NPS Opioids in the United States

TREND REPORT Q1 2023

NPS IN Q1 2023: 44% Opioids, 40% Stimulants & Antidepressants, 16% Synthetic Cannabinoids

NPS OPIOIDS IDENTIFIED

Drug	Toxicology	Drug Material
Methylphenidate/amphetamine/dextroamphetamine	1	1
Bupropion	1	1
Valproic acid	1	1
Carbamazepine	1	1
N-Dimethylaminoethanol	3	3
N-Propylaminoethanol	3	3
N-Propylaminoethanol	6	6
Propylamine	7	7
Metamfetamine	10	10

SELECT POSITIVITY: Q3 2019 to Q1 2023

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Buprenorphine analysis

- Can only generalize about expected levels
 - No credible way to say "X" dose should give "Y" level
 - Patients tend to stay within a certain range over time unless dose change
 - Trending helpful and can detect aberrancy
- Adulterated specimen
 - Bup without metabolite (always)
 - Bup >1000 ng/mL, even with metabolite (suggestive)
- Higher Bup levels than Norbup levels due to:
 - Dosing shortly before urine test
 - CYP 3A4 inhibitor or substrate which slows conversion to metabolite

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Matrix Considerations

- Window of detection
- Time to obtain results (availability of POCT)
- Ease of collection (need for trained personnel, collection facilities)
- Invasiveness/unpleasantness of collection
- Availability of the sample (e.g., renal health, shy bladder, baldness, dry mouth)
- Susceptibility of the sample to tampering


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	Drugs and metabolites are concentrated in urine Can compare to creatinine
	Drugs are found in much lower concentrations Easy to observe
	Drugs and metabolites incorporated into hair Concentrations of drugs low with sporadic use
	Prospective collection, 1-2 weeks Inter and intraindividual variability
	Invasive and expensive to test More direct relationship to impairment
	Easy to collect and observe Essentially limited to ethanol


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Which of the following drug screening tests is associated with the lowest rate of false positive results?



- A. Amphetamine
- B. Cocaine
- C. Opioids
- D. Phencyclidine



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Get in Touch

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