



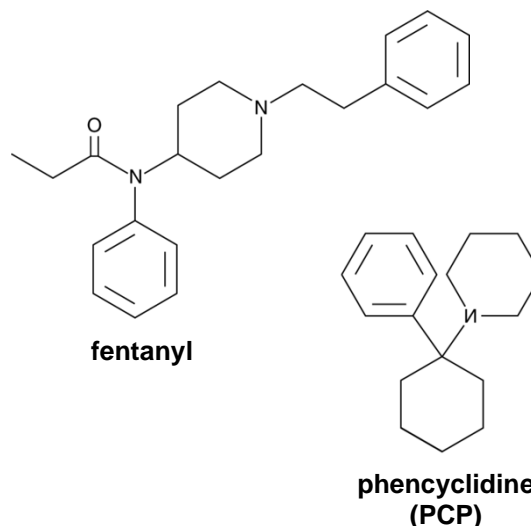
## Fentanyl-Laced Plant-Like Material

### Purpose

The District of Columbia Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) has created this bulletin to inform public health organizations, first responders, and law enforcement agencies of a change in the drug supply in Washington D.C. The findings in this bulletin have been confirmed by laboratory testing.

### Summary

The Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) routinely analyzes seized drug exhibits suspected to contain controlled dangerous substances. In March 2022, a clear bag with plant-like material was submitted to our laboratory. This item was recovered in February 2022. The plant-like material was initially suspected to contain synthetic cannabinoids, but instrumental analysis instead confirmed the presence of fentanyl and phencyclidine (PCP). No other substances were confirmed to be present. This is the first and only time it has been seen in our lab thus far.



**Figure 1.** Photograph of the plant-like material confirmed to be laced with fentanyl and PCP (*left*). Molecular structures of fentanyl (*middle*) and PCP (*right*).

### Implications and Associated Dangers

Both fentanyl and phencyclidine (PCP) can be absorbed rapidly into the bloodstream via inhalation. Fentanyl is a central nervous system (CNS) depressant, while PCP can both stimulate and depress the CNS.<sup>1</sup> When used in combination, an increased likelihood of overdose exists. This is the first sighting of fentanyl and PCP laced plant-like material, and as such, drug users may be unaware of the actual drugs present if synthetic cannabinoids were intended to be ingested. First responders should be made aware that users may encounter fentanyl in this form, and naloxone should continue to be administered in the event that an opioid overdose is suspected.

<sup>1</sup> Bey.T. and Patel, A., Phencyclidine Intoxication and Adverse Effects: A Clinical and Pharmacological Review of an Illicit Drug, *The California Journal of Emergency Medicine*, VIII: 1 February 2007: 9-14