

Halton police: fentanyl is in 'our own backyard'

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Last Tuesday, Halton groups shared their action plans on fighting a popular drug that has been hitting the streets in the past couple of years.

Fentanyl is an opioid pain medication that has been found circulating in the area since 2014. Since its introduction, local service groups, including the Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS), have been figuring out ways to keep residents, both traffickers and users, safe.

During the Nov. 14 meeting hosted by the Halton Equitable Drug Strategy (HEDS), which includes ADAPT, CMHA Halton, Support and Housing Halton, Halton District School Board, Halton Catholic District School Board, Mississauga/Halton LHIN and others, teams shared their part of the plan to residents of the region.

First to present was Det. Const. Mark Pidberezny and Greg Bryl of the HRPS. They explained since 2014, they have seen fentanyl show up more and more in people's homes and on the streets. At first, police did not know how to test for it - often, the drug comes back as false positives for cocaine and heroin.

A few years ago, fentanyl made its first appearance in powdered form. To save on money, drug traffickers would cut the potent substance into other mixes, like OxyContin, but the process is next to impossible to do safely - according to the detectives, the drug is mixed in a blender and then divided into separate baggies.

"The problem with that is the first baggy might have eight parts fentanyl, and the next bag have no parts fentanyl," Pidberezny said to the forum. "This is not an official pharmaceutical practice."



Kathryn Boyle/Metroland

On Nov. 14, Halton Police presented information regarding fentanyl at a forum hosted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. This year alone, there have been 32 fentanyl-related seizures and seven deaths. Here, Det. Cstbl. Mark Pidberezny and Greg Bryl present during the forum.

According to police, one kilogram of fentanyl can make one million tablets. At \$20-\$40 per tablet, traffickers can make up to \$40 million.

"In 2013, fentanyl was unheard of," Bryl said. "Now, it comes up once in every 10 cases."

Around the same time, a

new drug was introduced: carfentanil. This drug started out as a large animal tranquilizer and was not intended for humans. It is 10,000 times stronger than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl. It only takes a couple grains to kill someone, and it is appearing more and

more in people's homes.

With the increasing use and purchasing of this drug comes a safety concern for officers, and police have had to alter their safety precautions to keep themselves out of harm's way.

The detectives explained since 2013, there has been a steadily increasing number

in fentanyl-related seizures and deaths. In 2017, there have been 32 seizures due to fentanyl use, and already, seven deaths.

"You think because you're in Halton you live in this bubble," Bryl said. "But this is happening in our own backyard."

For police, fentanyl-related cases have become a priority, and they hope each officer will soon be equipped with a naloxone kit: a drug that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. They have also focused on the education portion of fentanyl by visiting high schools, because a lot of the time, it's kids who are exposed to the drug unknowingly.

"We will continue to focus on targeting dealers, but we know we cannot arrest our way out of it," Bryl said.

For more information on fentanyl and to learn more about the drug strategy, visit www.heds.ca.

A Child's Holiday Wish List

1. Stop Daddy from yelling and hitting Mommy all the time.
2. No more bruises or tears.
3. Help my family feel safe again.

This coming holiday season, not every child will wish for the same things.

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month. One out of every four women will be abused at some point in her life.

Halton Women's Place needs your help to close the door on abuse.



Halton
Women's
Place

In November, wear your purple scarf and tie.
Purchase yours at Halton Women's Place.



For more information, please call
905-332-1200 ext.221 or visit
www.haltonwomensplace.com

Crisis Line: 905-878-8970 or 905-332-7892