Rise of Street Chemistry

• Drugs are only illegal once the government declares them illegal.

• The government doesn’t declare a drug illegal until it becomes a concern.

• Changing the chemical formula of a molecule by 1 atom(!) gives you a new substance, not subject to existing laws.
The Internet

• Knowledge on drug modification used to be limited to chemistry texts and articles.

• Now, someone can modify a drug and share their recipe with an unlimited number of people.

• The street chemists are ahead of legislation – always!
Stimulants

[Chemical structures of stimulants: amphetamine, methamphetamine, cathinone, methcathinone, methylenedioxy-methamphetamine]
Opioids

Morphine

Heroin

Oxycodone

Methadone
Indoor Signs of a Drug Lab

- Laboratory Glassware or improvised glassware
- Containers connected by hoses or tubing
- Scales
- Packaging equipment
- Hot plates outside of food preparation areas
• Outdoor Signs of a Drug Lab

• Patches of dead vegetation
• Unusual occupancy habits (nocturnal activity versus dormant daytime)
CDC Recommendations for PPE

- **PPE** is **Personal Protective Equipment**
  - Respiratory Protection
  - Gloves
  - Gowns
  - Eye Protection
Fentanyl Precautions

• Powdered fentanyl is serious – and given enough time can absorb through your skin

• Some stories are exaggerated – standard gloves and face masks provide adequate protection against powder

• Make every effort to minimize time of exposure

• Ensure that fentanyl powder is not on clothes or shoes to prevent unprotected exposure
More Serious Risks

• Solids pose relatively low risk to skin and clothing – mucus membranes are the most vulnerable here

• Liquids and gases are more serious risks
  • These substances can be corrosive
  • Can soak through clothing
  • Particles small enough to pass through standard facemasks
  • Not always blocked by standard gloves

• If you come upon a scene contaminated with unknown liquid chemicals or that has corroded gas cylinders – wait for the scene to clear. Your equipment may not protect you!
Addiction Counseling Program

Westchester Community College has one of the few local programs to become a certified Addiction Counselor

- One-year certificate program
- Two-year Associates in Applied Science Program
Thank you!

Danielle C. Nerko, Ph.D
Westchester Community College
Danielle.Nerko@sunywcc.edu