

June 2017 Synthetic Opioid Outbreak in Georgia Highlights the Value of Poison Control Centers for the Rapid Detection of Drug Use Outbreaks

“PCCs are uniquely positioned to serve as the epicenters for the detection of regional clusters and outbreaks,” according to an American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) case study of a synthetic opioid exposure outbreak in Georgia. On June 5, 2017, the Georgia Poison Center (GPC) was notified by an emergency department (ED) doctor of five patients with similar respiratory and central nervous system symptoms. This call began a rapid response by the GPC to coordinate with key partners, identify the cause and other potentially related cases, and disseminate information to the public (see figure below). The GPC subsequently learned that all five patients bought what they thought to be Percocet pills from the same illicit drug house earlier the same day. The counterfeit Percocet pills were later found to contain a mixture of two synthetic opioids: U-47700 and cyclopropyl fentanyl, a previously unidentified fentanyl analogue. According to the AAPCC, “by proactively identifying cases of people ingesting counterfeit Percocet and connecting the dots from all these information sources in real-time, the Georgia Poison Center mobilized key partners like the GDPH [Georgia Department of Public Health] and GBI [Georgia Bureau of Investigation] and their resources, and notified the public via the media to halt the outbreak and save lives.” More detailed information about the steps taken by the GPC can be found in the AAPCC press release at <http://www.aapcc.org/press/79/>.

Timeline of June 2017 Georgia Synthetic Opioid Exposure Outbreak

