

This week NCHS released a unique study on the types of drugs involved in overdose deaths, from a regional perspective. The special analysis uses the literal text written on all death certificates that list at least 1 specific drug involved in the death. Researchers divided the U.S. into 10 different regions, to determine which drugs are most often associated with these deaths in various parts of the country. The results show some very interesting patterns.

In general, the Mississippi River serves as a dividing point as far as which drug is most often associated with overdose deaths. To the east of the Mississippi, Fentanyl is the drug most frequently associated with overdose deaths. In all 5 regions located east of the Mississippi, Fentanyl is the number one drug involved. West of the Mississippi, however, it is methamphetamine that is the number one drug involved in overdose deaths in 4 of the 5 regions to the West of the river. The exception, is the region that includes four states: Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. In this region, fentanyl is the number one drug involved in overdose deaths, with methamphetamine ranking second.

While fentanyl and methamphetamine are clearly involved in the most overdose deaths on a regional basis, heroin was the number two drug involved in overdose deaths in 6 of the 10 regions, and cocaine was the number two drug involved for these deaths in 3 regions.

This analysis is beneficial to the states, as they plan their strategies to reduce the tragedy of drug overdose deaths in their communities.