

**April 29, 2019**

## **The Dark Social Networking Sites (DSNS) & the Fentanyl Crisis**

According to some news media reports, Fentanyl is often sold on social media in the US and Canada, but there is very little empirical and systematic research on this issue. This study attempts to fill a gap in literature by utilizing big data and using selected searches to further understand this phenomenon. The study's sample includes a unique dataset retrieved from Twitter and Instagram that was collected from 23 May 2008 to 15 January 2019. The study examines a total of 3,117,365 tweets and 3,141,000 Instagram posts referencing fentanyl. Though the data includes a variety of posts such as activists and patients advocating against the use of the drug, there were 362 tweets and 5,687 Instagram posts that promoted fentanyl and provided detailed instructions on where and how to purchase it. This study then qualitatively examines the strategies followed by drug dealers which mostly include providing mobile apps communication methods as well as gmail addresses in order to arrange for money transfers and deliveries.

The learning objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Introduce and describe the problem of selling fentanyl on social media.
2. Discuss the challenges of collecting relevant data from social media.
3. Describe the method used to identify drug dealers and its limitations.
4. Provide examples on illicit drug sale on social media.
5. Suggest certain procedures to disrupt this kind of communication.

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Rounds are held weekly on Mondays from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm in the VGH Research Pavilion, Room 700, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 828 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC.

Visit [www.C2E2.ca](http://www.C2E2.ca) for information about previous and upcoming rounds. If you are interested in presenting please email [pamela.lee@ubc.ca](mailto:pamela.lee@ubc.ca).