

Testimony

of

Bridget G. Brennan  
Special Narcotics Prosecutor

Before

The New York City Council Committees on Finance  
and the Justice System

**Fiscal Year 2021**  
Executive Budget Hearing

May 20, 2020

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL NARCOTICS PROSECUTOR

# Fiscal Year 2021

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I would like to thank the City Council, and the Committees on the Justice System and Finance in particular, for all of the assistance you have provided during a tumultuous year. As we are in the midst of a life threatening pandemic, it is easy to forget that one year ago our concerns were very different. We needed significant resources to comply with requirements of the Criminal Justice Reforms (CJR), which became effective Jan. 1, 2020.

Chair Rory Lancman, you asked the right questions, and along with Chair Daniel Drumm, understood our needs and came to our aid, advocating on our behalf. Working with the Mayor, we were provided adequate resources in the November 2019 Plan to meet our new obligations for the current fiscal year. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also been extremely flexible and helpful.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the exemplary work of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), which assisted prosecutors, the courts and defenders, first on Criminal Justice Reforms, and now during the COVID-19 crisis. Director Liz Glazer has been thoughtful, responsible and an effective moderator during discussions about Criminal Justice Reforms, and has provided guidance and leadership during our current crisis. Deputy Director of Crime Strategies Deanna Logan has been our point person in MOCJ during this pandemic, and she has been knowledgeable, tireless and responsive. MOCJ has proven itself a tremendous resource to the Criminal Justice community. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) FY2021 budget requests.

As its top priority, SNP works to protect public safety and prevent overdose deaths by removing bulk quantities of dangerous drugs from the highest levels of the supply chain. Our work involves targeting major narcotics traffickers, identifying the sellers of drugs causing overdose deaths, and investigating medical professionals who prescribe addictive drugs to make money,

not for medical treatment. Also of great importance is our prevention work, where we have managed to fund safe recreational opportunities for at risk youth, and substance use prevention programs. Federal forfeiture guidelines have changed in recent years, making it difficult for agencies to spend federal forfeiture funds on community based programs. Therefore, most of our programs were funded with City funds provided in fiscal 2012 as part of our Safe Neighborhood Initiative with City Council support and subsequent baselined funding of \$40,000.

New York City serves as a regional hub for the distribution of narcotics produced by international trafficking organizations. Shipments flow through the city to drug networks in surrounding states. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, large loads of narcotics are being brought to our city and distributed locally and throughout the Northeast.

Since mid-March, when most of our office staff began to work remotely, we have been involved in the confiscation of more than 125 pounds of heroin and fentanyl in the metropolitan area, more than a half million dollars in cash, and the disruption of a Bronx-based fentanyl distribution ring caught with a million dollars' worth of heroin/fentanyl packages, some stamped with a coronavirus logo.

Our office has seen that deadly drugs are continuing to flood our city, even during this pandemic. We are concerned that those who currently need substance treatment services are unable to access them. In addition, during this highly stressful time, people are isolated and facing job losses, and substance use may increase as a result. Many law enforcement resources typically devoted to addressing narcotics trafficking have been diverted. Drug dealing within residential buildings in the city is always a source of concern for neighbors, and now residents also fear the spread of disease as a result of drug-related foot traffic where they live. We have already begun to initiate more long term investigations.

We understand the city's difficult financial situation in the current fiscal year, and are committed to making necessary budgetary adjustments in the face of a financial crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the City Council played a crucial role in securing funding to facilitate my office's compliance with sweeping Criminal Justice Reforms, which took effect on January 1, 2020. Without your support and assistance, we would not have received our CJR funding as quickly.

The City allocated \$1,587,000 in CJR funding to hire the additional personnel and procure up-to-date Information Technology (IT) resources required to comply with the new reform discovery law. This includes approximately \$783,000 for OTPS (other than personal service) and a baselined \$804,000 for PS (personal service) computed based on a seven-month period for fiscal year 2020. We are grateful to the City for recognizing our significant needs in meeting our new obligations.

This funding commitment preceded the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the dire financial situation now confronting the City. We have been working the Office of Management and Budget since March in an effort to generate savings in various areas in our operations, so we can help the city close its budget gap for fiscal year 2020. These discussions resulted in a mid-year cash reduction of just over \$1.34 million from our fiscal year 2020 budget. A portion of this reduction came from this year's CJR funding, which remained in reserve due to the short timeframe we had from receiving funding to the January 1 start date of the reforms to the COVID-19 outbreak. Currently, we have suspended efforts to recruit and hire staff to assist with our CJR obligations. The remainder of the cut was covered by attrition and retirements not replaced due to increased competition and COVID-19 hiring restrictions.

At the prompting of OMB, we have submitted actual and projected costs of \$292,000 for COVID-19 needs. Although we remain committed to reduced

onsite staff as much as possible in accordance with guidance from the Mayor and Governor, we have begun planning for an eventual reopening. This gradual process will involve careful implementation of procedures and protocols to provide our staff with a safe, clean and secure work place. This reopening process will be a costly one.

Our projected COVID-19 funding request to OMB is of \$292,000, covering the time period from March of 2020 to December 2020, split between FY2020 at an estimated \$215,000 and FY2021 at an estimated \$77,000, and for the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), Information Technology (IT) needs such as laptops and remote access for staff members working offsite, and modifications to our physical workspace, such as cubicles, partitions and minor construction costs. Our understanding is that this funding would come from the federal CARES Act. However, we have not received confirmation from OMB that we will indeed receive this funding. We have so far incurred COVID-19 expenses at \$97,000 in fiscal year 2020, with the rest of the costs projected to be split between fiscal years 2020 and 2021. We hope OMB will either increase funding in our budget to cover these costs or reimburse us for the costs.

As Chair Lancman knows, I testified at length yesterday with regard to our efforts to reduce population in the City jails in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, so I will not go over that again. As you know our jurisdiction and caseload are unique; other questions in your letter pertain to the types of cases prosecuted by the District Attorneys' Offices.

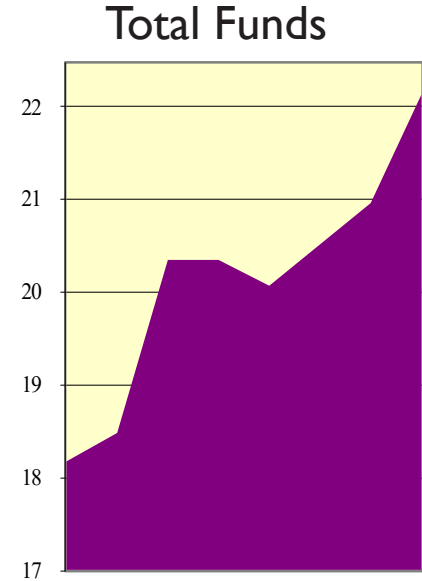
Finally, I would like to thank the Chairs for their past assistance, and for the commitment, passion and wisdom they will bring to the challenges that lie ahead.

**Bridget G. Brennan**  
Special Narcotics Prosecutor  
for the City of New York

# Funding

## Overall Funding Outlook

For current fiscal year 2020, our grant funds have increased slightly and returned to fiscal year 2017 levels. City funds allocated to our office have also shown a minor increase of 1% or \$243,195, according to the proposed executive plan for fiscal year 2021. In total, we have seen a 2% overall funding increase



In millions, 2014-2021 (projected) CB funds excluded.

or \$447,218 from all funding sources, including City, State and Federal, in fiscal year 2020 compared with the total funding we received in last fiscal year 2019.

In its executive plan for fiscal year 2021 and out years, the City proposed a mid-year PEG (program to eliminate gap) or a cash reduction to our fiscal year 2020

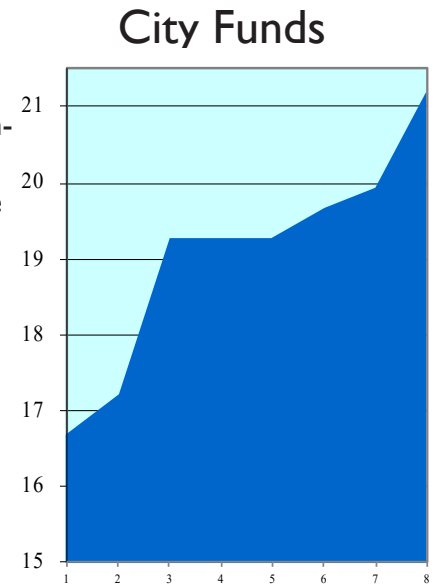
budget at \$1,347,779. The nation is confronted by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic with our city at the epicenter, placing us in a dire financial situation. We have been working the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over the past few months in an effort to generate savings in various areas in our operations, so we can help the City close its budget gap for fiscal year 2020.

For fiscal year 2021, no change was proposed to our City funding according to the City’s executive plan. However, we are facing baseline shortfalls in Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) funding. And as we continue our efforts to combat COVID-19 under a statewide “pause” order, we have begun preparations for re-opening. It will be a gradual process as we must use caution and implement procedures and protocols to provide our staff with the necessary protective sup-

plies, and a safe, clean and secure work place when the city is ready to reopen. This reopening process will be a costly one.

## City Funding Needs

We are grateful for all of the support we have received from the City Council over the years. This year, however, we are especially thankful for the efforts you have made in helping our agency and the District Attorneys’ offices secure CJR funding from the City. The City Council played a crucial role in this initiative and without your support and assistance, we would not have received our CJR funding as quickly.



In millions, 2014-2021 (projected) CB funds excluded.

As a result of your efforts, we received \$1,587,000 in CJR funds in fiscal year 2020 and we were able to hire the additional personnel and procure up-to-date IT resources required in order to comply with the new reform discovery law. While the COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on our recruitment and procurement efforts, it also allowed us to generate the cost savings we need to meet our PEG target and help the City close its gap this year.

In fiscal year 2021, however, we will be faced with shortfalls in City funding. This shortfall is caused by the fact that we only received partial CJR funding for fiscal year 2021 and out years. CJR funding provided for personnel services (PS) are used to pay for salaries of new hires. Our funding was computed for a seven-month period for fiscal year 2020. The same amount was baselined for fiscal year 2021 and out years, instead of the full 12-month year. OMB agreed

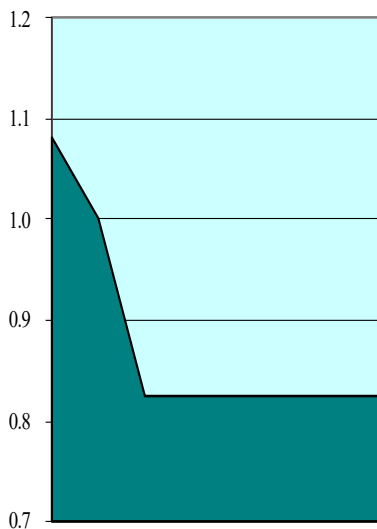
in late 2019 that they will revisit and possibly annualize CJR funding to cover full-year salaries for our reform-related hires.

In addition to our CJR funding shortfall, we also need COVID-19 funding to cover our projected costs associated with this pandemic. We have reported our actual cost to date, as well as projected COVID-19 cost totaling \$292,000, to OMB as requested. We are asking that the City either provide COVID-19 funding to us or reimburse us for actual costs.

## State Funding Reductions

In fiscal year 2016, two of our three State grant programs were ended by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The total loss in State funding that year alone was \$257,100 or 24%. We currently

### State Funds



In millions, 2014-2021 (projected).

have one State grant left, which is our SNP Aid to Prosecution program. In fiscal year 2021, we are hopeful that State funding for this program will remain the same as in the current year. Over the past decade, funding for this grant, our longest running, has been reduced six times from \$1,425,000 in fiscal year 2003 to a total of \$825,000 in fiscal year 2019. The

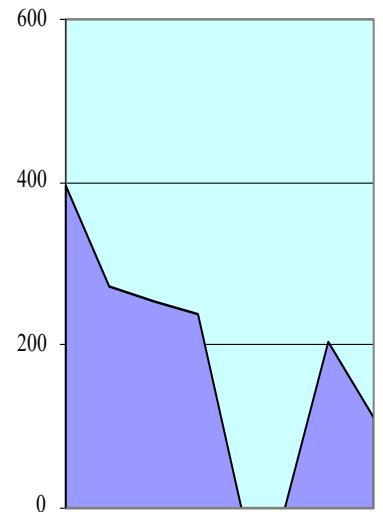
loss in this State grant alone amounted to a stunning \$600,000 or 42%.

## Loss in Federal Funds

Over the past decade, our Federal funding declined drastically from \$843,059 in fiscal year 2013 to \$236,728 in fiscal year 2017.

In the last two fiscal years, 2018 and 2019, we received \$0 in Federal funding due to sanctuary city status. In fiscal year 2020, after the removal of sanctuary city status, we received \$204,023 for our two JAG programs. This brought our Federal funding back to near fiscal year 2017 levels. At the present time, we have not received any information regarding our Federal funding for fiscal year 2021

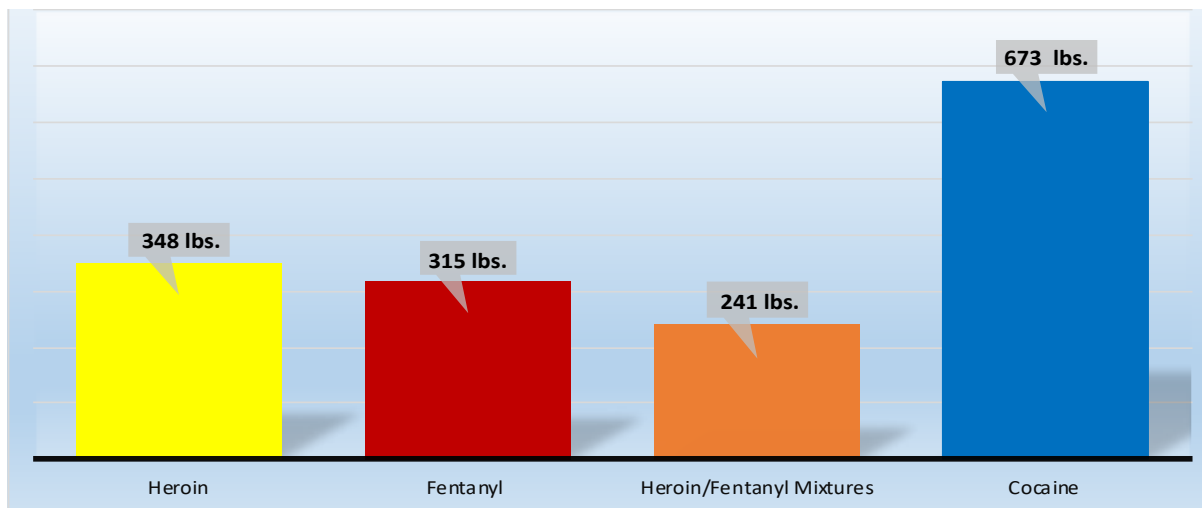
### Federal Funds



In thousands, 2014-2021 (projected).

# Saving Lives Through Supply Reduction

## SNP Narcotics Seizures in Pounds: 2019 (Preliminary)



The central mission of Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) is to protect public safety and prevent overdose deaths by removing dangerous drugs from the highest levels of the supply chain. New York City serves as a regional hub for the distribution of narcotics produced by international trafficking organizations. Shipments flow through the city to drug networks in surrounding states. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, large loads of narcotics are being brought to our city and distributed locally and throughout the Northeast.

Working in partnership with the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the New York State Police and other law enforcement teams, SNP tracked and intercepted potent heroin, cocaine, the synthetic opioid

fentanyl and methamphetamine in 2019. Mexican cartels continue to use sophisticated concealment methods to smuggle shipments on established routes across the Southwest border in cars and trucks. Narcotics also travel by plane, boat and parcel delivery services.

Much of the heroin and fentanyl that enters New York City arrives in the Bronx, where numerous transportation thoroughfares converge and provide access to large metropolitan areas across the region. Dozens of large-scale packaging “mill” operations across the city each pump out many thousands of individual dose glassine envelopes of heroin and fentanyl. These mixtures are increasingly lethal as evidenced by historically high rates of fatal overdoses. Cocaine trafficking surged in 2019 and the stimulant is increasingly involved in overdose deaths.



Typical of large scale heroin and fentanyl packaging operations, two interrelated “mill” locations in the Bronx catered to customers throughout the Northeast. Agents seized approximately 870,000 filled glassine envelopes stamped with a variety of brands, including “Coronavirus” and “Fire,” with a street value of close to \$9 million.

# Fentanyl Analog Legislation

An influx of fentanyl analogs is the latest wave in the opioid epidemic. An analog is a slight variation of fentanyl which may have the same or greater effect on the body, but may not be regulated because its chemical composition is not exactly the same. In July of 2019, SNP released a New York State Grand Jury Report detailing the deadly toll of these highly potent variations of fentanyl. The Grand Jury heard evidence regarding lack of regulation of these substances and the overdoses and deaths associated with them.

In 2019, fentanyl analogs were present in approximately 40% of all New York City overdoses resulting from a non-prescription opioid. Yet regulation has been piecemeal and only select fentanyl analogs are regulated in New York State. The Report recommended that the New York State Legislature prohibit all forms of fentanyl analogs and allocate additional funding for police labs, offices of medical examiners, and for treatment to assist substance users whose risk of death may increase with analog exposure.

After SNP and the city's five District Attorneys spotlighted the Grand Jury report, 13 additional fentanyl-related substances were added to New York State's list of controlled substances. While legislators stopped short of banning all fentanyl analogs, progress was made and Gov. Andrew Cuomo continues to show great leadership in this area. Ms. Brennan urged Congress to permanently ban all fentanyl analogs, emphasizing that

states are reliant upon the federal government to effectively control dangerous substances originating from foreign sources.

Fentanyl analogs are produced from precursor chemicals originating largely in China. Foreign laboratories need only tweak the chemical composition to create new analogs and evade enforcement. Currently, the federal government has a temporary ban on fentanyl analogs.

More than a dozen different analogs have been identified in New York City. Readily available through the Dark Web, these substances are typically shipped in small packages via international parcel delivery services and the U.S. Mail, passing through John F. Kennedy International Airport and other busy transshipment points. Fentanyl analogs are occasionally seized alongside bulk quantities of fentanyl and heroin in shipments from Mexico.

Low level narcotics organizations sell analogs mixed with fentanyl, heroin and other substances. Analogues can be highly pure and therefore lethal in low concentrations. It is difficult for local law enforcement agencies to intercept and identify unregulated compounds. Prosecutors are unable to obtain search warrants or make arrests in cases, even when deaths have resulted, unless controlled substances are also involved.



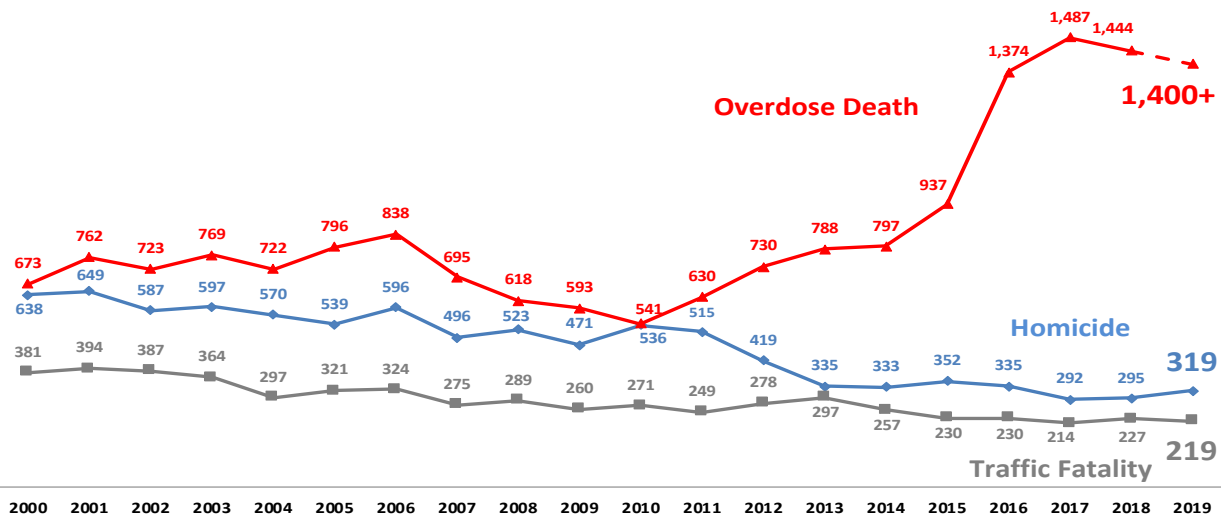
*Bridget Brennan testified at a Congressional hearing examining the homeland security implications of the opioid epidemic.*



*Bridget Brennan announced a Grand Jury Report on fentanyl analogs with the NYPD at One Police Plaza.*

# Overdose Death Investigations

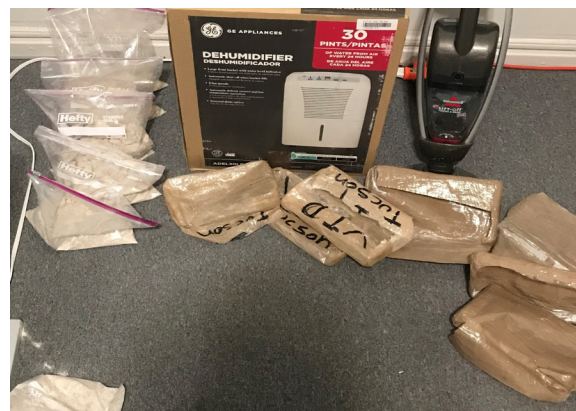
## Overdose Deaths in New York City Remain at Epidemic Levels



SNP and partner agencies investigate overdose deaths to identify organizations that supply lethal drugs and prevent further fatalities. An investigation into three overdose deaths and two non-fatal overdoses in the Bronx and Westchester led law enforcement agents to dismantle a multimillion dollar drug operation in October of 2019. Over 30 pounds of heroin and fentanyl with a street value of over \$4 million, as well as five handguns, an assault rifle and \$170,000 cash were seized in court authorized searches in Morris Park in the Bronx and Elmsford, N.Y. Furniture was outfitted with hidden compartments to conceal narcotics. Nine individuals were arrested, including two charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker. The investigation revealed direct communications between one manager and suppliers in Mexico. Members of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Border Enforcement Security/Task-

force (BEST) recovered ledgers detailing the operation's finances, indicating more than \$2 million came in between January and September of 2019 alone.

Earlier in 2019, an investigation sparked by the fatal overdose of a 28-year-old man in the Upper East Side led to the indictment of 14 defendants in the Bronx and Manhattan. An alleged supplier, Jose "Cataño" Jorge, is accused of knowingly selling lethal drugs. In chilling conversations with an undercover officer, Cataño allegedly described mixing fentanyl with heroin and declared overdoses "good for business" because then everyone wants what he is selling. Also charged is retired NYPD officer Edward Wagner, who allegedly sold the undercover officer cocaine, heroin, boxes of bullets, a ballistic vest and a shotgun. Wagner's son was also a target of the investigation, but died of unknown causes prior to the arrests.



An investigation into overdose deaths tracked back to members of a multi-million dollar narcotics organization who coordinated drug shipments with suppliers in Mexico.



# Drugs and Violence



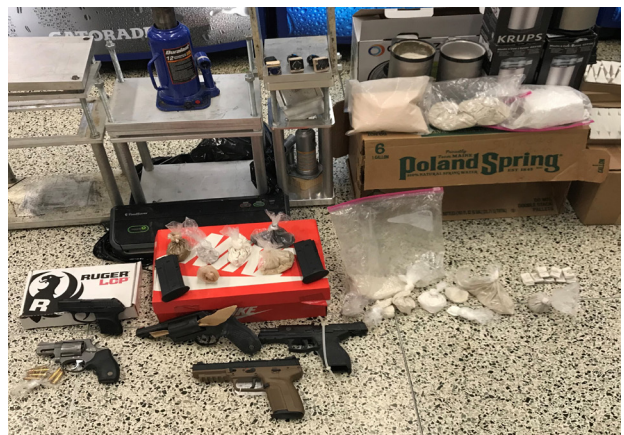
*Defendant Michael Watson allegedly fired shots on a residential street in Brooklyn as a rival attempted to escape in a silver sedan.*

SNP strives to protect New York City neighborhoods from the destabilizing effects of drug-related violence by investigating a wide variety of organizations, from street gang affiliates to entrenched narcotics distribution groups. In partnership with the NYPD and the DEA, we identify and prosecute members of violent drug distribution networks that endanger our communities.

In a recent case, two overdoses, one of which was fatal, led to the arrest of 10 members of a Brooklyn criminal organization engaged in gun violence. An investigation by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North involved sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to an undercover officer. Among the defendants charged were multiple members from the same family: brothers Michael Watson and Marvin Watson and their nephews Jerry Watson and Earl Watson.

Video from a security camera captured the Watson brothers engaged in a violent shootout in broad daylight. They used a vehicle to block the flow of traffic on a narrow residential street in an attempt to corner a rival. A total of 20 shots were fired as pedestrians sought cover.

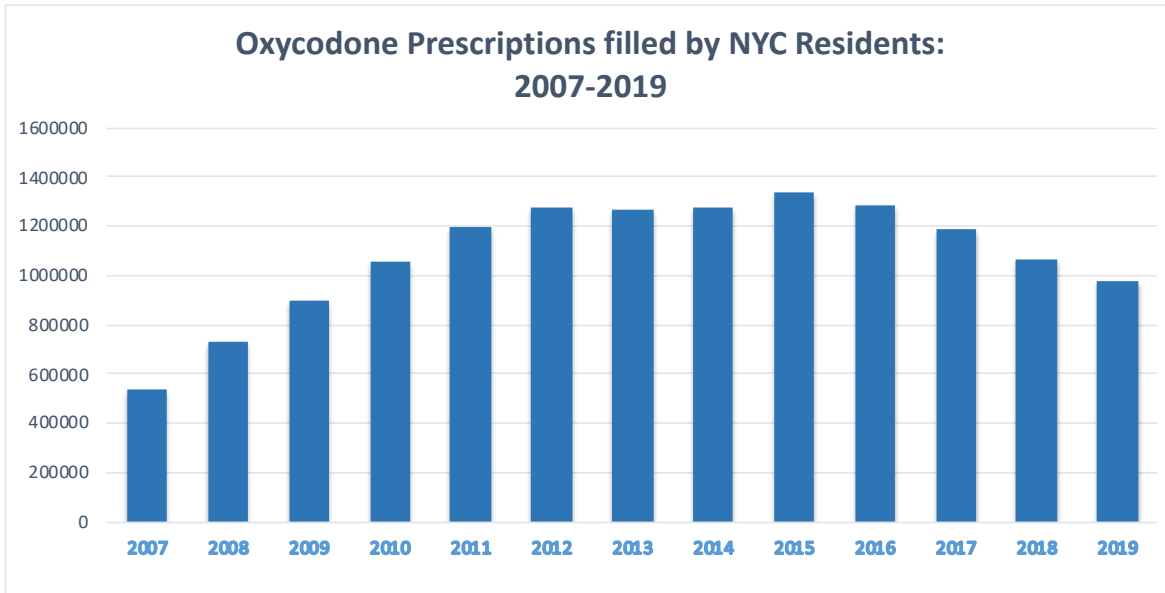
Two days after this incident, police received another report of shots being fired. Michael Watson was observed driving away from the scene. Police later found him at a stash location and acquired a search warrant. They recovered four guns, cocaine, and various drug paraphernalia at the location. A total of 12 guns were seized during the investigation.



*Narcotics and 12 guns were seized from a trafficking group implicated in broad daylight shootouts.*

# Prescription Drug Investigations

## Oxycodone Rx's Filled by NYC Residents: 2007-2019



Since its creation in 2011, SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit (PDIU) has targeted large scale pill mills, pharmaceutical drug trafficking rings and corrupt medical practitioners who sell prescriptions for highly addictive pills in exchange for cash. As a result of these efforts, combined with improved education for doctors, increased public awareness and more effective regulatory systems, the black market supply of diverted prescription drugs in New York City has been reduced.

Significantly, the office has obtained the convictions of two doctors on manslaughter charges in connection with separate investigations involving patients' deaths. In November of 2019, the New York Court of Appeals broke new legal ground as it affirmed the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan Xuhui Li, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison following a jury trial in 2014. The court ruled that doctors can face homicide charges, in certain instances, if the drugs they prescribe are involved in the fatal overdose of a patient. It was the first New York high court decision to rely on the legal theory in a homicide case.

Also in 2019, Dr. Lawrence Choy, a physician for over 35 years, was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to charges of manslaughter, reckless endangerment and illegal prescription sales related to three patients' deaths.

## New York Law Journal



www.nylj.com

An ALM Publication  
NOVEMBER 26, 2019

### NY High Court Rules Doctors Can Face Homicide Charges Over Drug Overdose Deaths

The decision, which was nearly unanimous, means the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan XuHui Li of Queens over the deaths of two of his patients will be allowed to stand.

By Dan M. Clark

The New York Court of Appeals has ruled that doctors can face homicide charges, in certain instances, if the drugs they prescribe are used by one of their patients during a fatal overdose on the medication. It is the first New York high court decision to rely on the legal theory in a homicide case.

The decision, which was nearly unanimous, means the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan XuHui Li of Queens over the deaths of two of his patients will be allowed to stand.

Associate Justice Eugene Fahey wrote for the majority that, given the facts of the case, a jury was correct in finding Li guilty on the charges of manslaughter in 2014 after two of his patients, Joseph Haeg and Nicholas Rappold, died of opioid overdoses. "We conclude that a rational jury could have found that defendant was aware of and consciously disregarded a substantial and unjustifiable risk that his prescription practices would result in the deaths of Haeg and Rappold," Fahey wrote. Li was accused by prosecutors from the New York City Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor of running what's known as a "pill mill," an office where the physician drives



Photo: Video, CreativeShutterstock.com

business by prescribing a disproportionate amount of addictive drugs.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan said the decision Tuesday was nine years in the making, from their investigation into Li to his trial and the resulting appeals.

"Today's Court of Appeals decision makes clear that those who recklessly cause a death can be held criminally responsible, even if their conduct is disguised as a medical practice," Brennan said. "We hope this brings a sense of justice and closure to the patients and families who suffered as a result of Dr. Stan XuHui Li's conduct."

In the decision Tuesday, the Court of Appeals laid out the facts of the case brought by prosecutors, who portrayed Li's practice as one influenced by profit, rather than treatment.

His office, in Flushing, was only open one day a week, on the weekend, and didn't require appointments to be seen. Prosecutors said he saw as many as 90 patients in a single day and charged a base fee of \$100 per visit. Payments were only allowed in cash.

When patients showed up seeking a prescription for a controlled

New York Law Journal- November 26, 2019

# Prevention and Education

The Office of Special Narcotics seeks not only to diminish the supply and distribution of narcotics through prosecution of high-level traffickers, but to save the lives of New York City residents by educating the public about the dangers of street level narcotics.

Over the past four years, the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Staten Island District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark have served as clients and worked closely with teams of graduate student researchers from Columbia University examining the opioid epidemic in New York City. These capstone teams have produced independent reports and recommendations for improved access to treatment services, substance abuse education and prevention initiatives.


In the Spring of 2019, students from Columbia's School of International Public Affairs (SIPA) created a report entitled "Combating the Opioid Epidemic through Effective Messaging and Prevention Strategies." The capstone team focused on the enhancement of opioid education for students in grades 6-12 and prevention strategies that could be incorporated into the city's educational system. They examined mental health education in tandem with opioid awareness.

This messaging and prevention education work is being carried forward on two tracks. In the Spring of 2020, a new SIPA team is involved in creating a small advertising campaign targeting teens to promote healthy lifestyle choices with an emphasis on substance abuse education and prevention. This campaign will effectively use social media and partnerships to reach young teens. The group will also provide guidelines to grow the campaign into a widescale popular platform in order to spread awareness.

Currently, a graduate student from Teachers College is pursuing an independent study involving the use of effective drug education resources as a basis for an Opioid Crisis Prevention Education rubric for teachers. This rubric is designed to aid teachers in assessing the

Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs


## Combating the Opioid Epidemic through Effective Messaging and Prevention Education Strategies



**Team:** Preeti Aujla, Milena d'Ornano, Minwen Feng, Lawrence McDonald, Addie Thompson, Sloan Woods

**Faculty Advisor:** Janet Tobias

Spring 2019  
Capstone  
Workshop  
Program



*Student researchers at Columbia University produced an independent report with recommendations on how to combat opioid crisis through messaging and prevention education.*

effectiveness of education materials on the topic of the opioid epidemic with the goal of supporting students in making informed decisions.

Over the summer a team of city educators collaborated with SNP to create a bank of over 60 lessons for multiple courses and grade levels to educate youth about the opioid epidemic and growing issue of substance abuse. Enabling students to make informed decisions based on credible information is one of the best ways to combat this crisis.

# Community Initiatives



In partnership with the city's five District Attorneys, SNP seeks to leave a positive imprint on communities touched by our major drug enforcement operations by investing in safe recreational opportunities for neighborhood youth. SNP partners with the city's District Attorneys, the Police Athletic League (PAL) and the New York City Police Department (NYPD) each year.

During the summer of 2019, SNP partnered with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the NYPD and PAL to sponsor a West 123rd Street PAL Playstreet to provide safe and enjoyable activities for local youth. This endeavor followed a long-term investigation into persistent drug trafficking in the area. The investigation was sparked by numerous community complaints.

Drug sellers congregated in groups, impeding the ability of passersby, including school children, to safely use the block. Police arrested 11 individuals for over 50 sales of crack cocaine and heroin to undercover officers.

SNP is committed to educating communities across New York City about the opioid epidemic in an effort to prevent substance abuse and overdose. Bridget G. Brennan served as a panelist at "The Opioid Crisis in Northern Manhattan: A Community Forum" organized by Senator Robert Jackson in partnership with the Fort Washington Collegiate Church, the Washington Heights CORNER Project and VOCAL-NY in October of 2019. The event featured a discussion of efforts to address the opioid epidemic, which has had devastating effect on families and neighborhoods.



*SNP Community Affairs Director Calvin Solomon (left) and James Secreto, then the NYPD's Housing Bureau Chief, attend the PAL Summer Playstreet Opening Ceremony in Harlem.*



*Bridget G. Brennan served as a panelist at a community forum on the opioid crisis in Northern Manhattan.*

# Case Highlights

## Fentanyl and Heroin in Bulk

### ***“Fire” Heroin/Fentanyl Worth \$7 Million Seized***

A long term investigation into heroin and fentanyl trafficking led to six arrests at a high volume drug packaging mill in the Bronx. After conducting intensive surveillance on a Sedgwick Avenue apartment, agents and officers with the DEA’s Drug Enforcement Task Force obtained a search warrant and entered to find six individuals. A surprising discovery even for veteran narcotics agents, the defendants had allegedly filled over 750,000 glassine envelopes with a street value of approximately \$7 million. The narcotics were believed to be destined for distribution in New York and Massachusetts. Hundreds of thousands of glassine envelopes covered two table tops and overflowed from plastic bins and cardboard boxes on the floor and a bed. Equipment and paraphernalia typical of a heroin/fentanyl mill were present in the room, including a glass table, desk lamps, a scale, grinders, empty glassine envelopes, small spoons, an ink bottle, ink pads and stamps.



*Over 750,000 “fire” stamped glassines with heroin/fentanyl mixtures were found in the Bronx packaging mill.*

### ***\$5 Million Worth of Heroin and Fentanyl Seized: “El Chapo” Brand***



*3 kilograms of heroin packages and 250,000 glassines were branded with various stamps such as “EL Chapo” and “Exit 4”.*

Approximately \$5 million in heroin and fentanyl was intercepted in the Bronx, including 250,000 ready for use glassine envelopes and an additional three kilograms in bulk, which were destined for distribution New York City and the Northeast. Members of a drug trafficking organization used a variety of different stamps to brand the narcotics, including “El Chapo” and “Exit 4”. The El Chapo stamp was a nod to the convicted leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel, while the Exit 4 stamp referenced an exit off the Massachusetts Turnpike near Springfield, Mass., where one of the defendants resided. Some of the heroin and fentanyl was recovered from a vehicle, while the majority was found during a court authorized search of an apartment on Wallace Avenue. Glassine envelopes of heroin were piled on tables, in bags and on the floor. Most had been bundled into rectangular packages according to brand name, ready for delivery on the street. The three kilograms were in brick form and wrapped in cellophane. Three defendants were charged following the investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force.

### **Major Trafficker Extradited from Dominican Republic**

A high-level alleged narcotics trafficker accused of setting up and supplying a series of heroin and fentanyl packaging operations in the Bronx was extradited from the Dominican Republic to face trial in New York City. A long-term wiretap investigation by the New York Strike Force revealed that Anyerson Delacruz-Rosario directed at least two heroin packaging operations in New York City from his base in the Dominican Republic. Delacruz-Rosario faces the top narcotics charge Operating as a Major Trafficker. The investigation began in October of 2014 following a young man's death from a fatal overdose in Sullivan County, N.Y. Eleven defendants were previously arrested as a result of the investigation. All pled guilty. Ten were sentenced, while one fled prior to being sentenced, prompting a Manhattan Supreme Court justice to issue a bench warrant. Agents and officers conducted court authorized searches at 11 locations, including an apartment housing a drug packaging mill and multiple stash locations. Officers recovered thousands of individual dose glassine envelopes, approximately five kilograms of fentanyl, more than 1.5 kilograms of heroin and a loaded .357 Magnum. The narcotics carried an estimated value of \$2 million once packaged for street-level sales.

### **\$5 Million in Fentanyl Hidden in Trap Compartment**

A large load of 18 kilograms of fentanyl (approximately 40 lbs.) was seized from a hidden trap in the rear of a Kia Sorrento in the Bronx. Members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force stopped the car near the Bronx River Parkway after conducting round-the-clock surveillance in the vicinity of 1690 East 174th Street. On the previous day, agents and officers observed the driver shining a light around the inside of the rear passenger area of the Kia Sorrento, which was parked. The car remained in the parking spot near 1690 East 174th Street overnight while agents maintained surveillance. Early the next morning, the driver placed a heavy looking gym bag in the backseat of the car and climbed inside the rear passenger area. He could be seen moving around and wiping the seat with a rag. He drove off and was stopped minutes later. The empty gym bag was inside the car when officers found the 18 kilograms of fentanyl.



*A defendant is seen carrying a heavy duffel bag on security footage. He entered a car that was later found to contain 18 kilograms of fentanyl.*

### ***Fentanyl Assault on Officer Inside Drug Packaging Mill***

A defendant was charged with assault for throwing toxic fentanyl at law enforcement officers who were in the process of conducting a court authorized search of a drug packaging location in the Bronx. Multiple officers required medical treatment for nausea and shortness of breath after defendant Christian Rojas allegedly threw the potent illicit opioid at an officer's head, causing powder to become airborne. Seven defendants were found inside the drug packaging mill on Willis Avenue in Mott Haven, where approximately 20,000 individual glassines had been filled with heroin and fentanyl. Additional quantities of narcotics were present in loose powder form. All seven of the defendants face top narcotics possession charges.



*20,000 glassines were being packaged in the apartment. Additional fentanyl powder was recklessly strewn around the location.*

### ***Pallets of Drugs Shipped from Mexico to U.S. Cities***



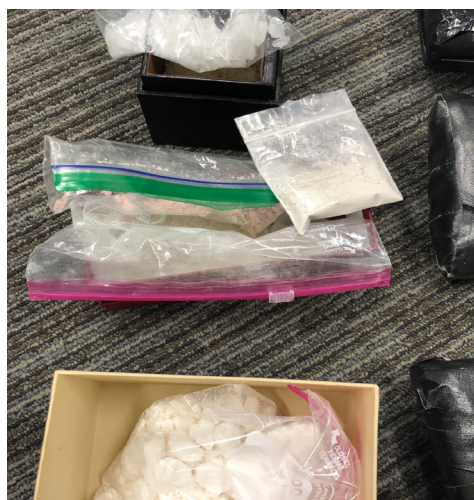
*Bulk amounts of drugs were shipped from Mexico to the U.S. in hidden shipping pallets.*

An investigation disrupted a sophisticated scheme to smuggle bulk amounts of drugs hidden in shipping pallets from Mexico to cities across the U.S. Two pallets intercepted in Brooklyn and in Memphis, Tenn. and contained a total of 12 kilograms (over 25 lbs.) of heroin and cocaine. Agents with the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force linked these shipments to a defendant based in Brownsville, Tex., who was arrested and extradited to New York City to face trial. At the time of his arrest, the defendant was in possession of a phone and other evidence associated with 10 shipments of narcotics. Besides the narcotics, the pallets contained hundreds of pounds of discarded household goods.

The investigation identified approximately 100 pallets that followed a similar pattern, including the use of a shipping account under a fake name associated with the defendant. Additional pallets were subsequently intercepted in Baton Rouge, La. and Fort Wayne, Ind. and contained 217 lbs. of marijuana and 10 lbs. of methamphetamine.

### **Multi-Drug Packaging Mill Dismantled Near Bronx School**

A three-bedroom apartment housed a multi-drug packaging mill on the same block as a private elementary school and a day care center. Over six kilograms of narcotics (13 lbs.), including three kilograms of fentanyl, three kilograms of heroin and quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine, were recovered by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. A defendant was observed leaving the mill location on Andrews Avenue in the Bronx carrying a black backpack, which contained three brick-shaped packages of heroin and fentanyl. Upon conducting a court authorized search of the apartment, agents and officers found an additional three brick-shaped packages of heroin, as well as several plastic bags containing methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin. Also recovered were narcotics paraphernalia, including empty glassine envelopes, a scale, grinders and a kilogram press. The DEA estimated the wholesale value of the drugs recovered at over \$300,000 and the street value at approximately \$1 million. The defendant was sentenced to four years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.



*A Bronx daycare center and elementary school were located on the same block as a drug packaging mill that contained heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine.*

## **Fentanyl Analog Investigations**

### **Fentanyl Analogs Cause Rash of Overdoses in Brooklyn: 14 Charged**

A rash of overdoses linked to fentanyl analogs in South Brooklyn sparked a wiretap investigation that resulted in the arrest and indictment of 14 individuals. The defendants are charged in connection with two drug distribution organizations that sold cocaine, heroin, fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. Fentanyl analogs are potent variants of fentanyl that are produced illicitly, but are largely unregulated in New York State. The two drug rings obtained narcotics from a common source of supply, Brandice Williams, who faces the top narcotics charge of Operating as a Major Trafficker. Williams was living in Virginia



at the time of her arrest and allegedly travelled to Brooklyn to deliver narcotics. Defendant Waldemar Valentin, aka “Wiz,” the alleged head of one of the two drug rings supplied by Williams, is also charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker. More than 175 instances of drug sales or possession were linked to his ring, which operated out of two South Brooklyn motels. Valentin also faces charges of assault and witness intimidation in connection with a baseball bat beating of an individual suspected of stealing from the drug ring. The beating occurred inside a car in a Staples store parking lot.

The Marlboro Houses, a New York City Housing Authority residential complex, was the hub of lucrative drug activity for the second organization. Drugs, guns and ammunition were stashed inside various apartments at the complex. Defendant James Sease resided in New Jersey and regularly commuted in his Mercedes to Brooklyn for drug sales. During the investigation, Sease allegedly spent some criminal profits on shopping sprees at high end stores. At Chanel, Sease purchased a \$5,000 bag with a stack of \$20 bills, which he photographed on his phone. He also shopped at Bergdorf Goodman. Following his arrest, Sease was indicted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York in a sweeping racketeering case involving the Brims gang. He is currently in federal custody.

## Citywide Cocaine Supply

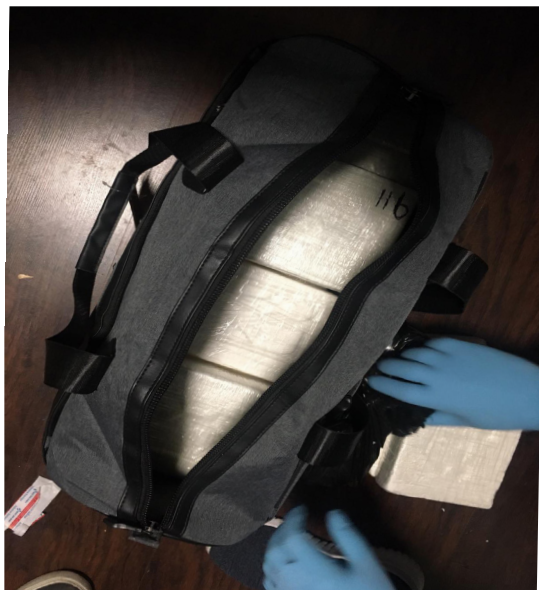
### ***Multi-Million Dollar Cocaine Shipment Seized in Hunts Point***

A \$3 million cocaine shipment was seized in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx during an investigation into narcotics activity at a commercial warehouse. Members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force conducting surveillance observed a series of cars and trucks entering through a metal security gate at the warehouse. Agents stopped a Hyundai Santa Fe previously seen with different license plates. Inside were two large black suitcases containing 70 kilograms (over 154 lbs.) of cocaine. In a subsequent court authorized search of the warehouse, Port Authority K-9 “Balu” alerted to the presence of narcotics in a truck trailer that entered the location earlier that day. Agents discovered a hidden compartment at the top of the trailer. The main area contained bags of rotted papayas, and pallets of cartons of oregano and coconuts.



A narcotics investigation in Hunts Point led to the seizure of over 150 pounds of cocaine that had been offloaded in a warehouse.

## **Major Cocaine Trafficker Indicted: Ordered Shipments Direct from Mexico**



*Police discovered 29 kilograms of cocaine in the heavy luggage that co-defendants were transporting to a vacant apartment.*

The accused leader of a multi-million-dollar cocaine trafficking organization and three others were arrested following a long term wiretap investigation by the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Miguel Rodriguez is charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker for allegedly overseeing the shipment and sale of 30 kilograms of cocaine (approximately 66 lbs.) worth over a million dollars in February 2020. Rodriguez directly contacted a source of supply in Mexico to coordinate international shipments of narcotics. The wiretap investigation revealed the organization trafficked in a comparable amount on a monthly basis. Acutely aware of law enforcement, the defendants stashed escape vehicles in different neighborhoods around the city. On the day that agents and officers seized the 30 kilograms of cocaine, Rodriguez initially directed his co-defendant to transfer the nar-

cotics at a hotel, but changed plans due to too much activity in the lobby. Rodriguez instead directed his codefendants to bring the cocaine to a vacant apartment on West 130th Street in Manhattan. Agents and officers observed one of Rodriguez's codefendants enter the apartment carrying two heavy pieces of luggage, which proved to contain 29 kilograms of cocaine. An additional kilogram was recovered from a vehicle. Rodriguez was stopped leaving the apartment. Charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, the only narcotics charge that qualifies for bail or remand under the new criminal justice reforms, Rodriguez was ordered remanded at the time of his arraignment.

## **Large Load of "Pablo Escobar" Branded Narcotics Seized**

Approximately 30 kilograms of narcotics, including cocaine, heroin and synthetic painkillers, and \$200,000 cash were seized in Harlem as a result of an investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Kilogram-sized packages were wrapped in brown, black and clear tape, with various labels affixed on top. Among the labels was a photo of the notorious drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, as well of pieces of paper marked with his name. Other labels bore recipient code names and images of airplanes. Agents seized the narcotics during a short term investigation in which they observed two men meet in the vicinity of 630 Lenox Avenue. One man then entered an apartment at that address and later reemerged with a gray backpack containing three kilograms. A court authorized search of



*Kilogram-sized packages were wrapped and labeled with various images, including the notorious drug trafficker Pablo Escobar.*

the apartment uncovered the other 27 kilograms of narcotics. The total street value of the 30 kilograms (66 lbs.) of narcotics seized was an estimated \$3 million. Hernandez was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.

## NYC Distribution Networks

### “Operation Frostbite” Nets Fourteen

Fourteen defendants in the Bronx and Manhattan were indicted in sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine following an investigation sparked by a fatal overdose in the Upper East Side. The victim, a 28-year-old man, died in a diner in January 2018. Jose “Cataño” Jorge, based in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx, faces narcotics and conspiracy charges, as well as reckless endangerment for knowingly selling potentially lethal drugs. In chilling conversations with an undercover officer, Cataño allegedly described how he mixed fentanyl into the heroin he sold. Laughing off an accusation of causing a death, he explained that overdoses are actually “good for business” because then everyone wants what he is selling. Cataño was held in jail at the time of his arrest, but later released as a result of bail reform that took effect on January 1, 2020.

Also charged is former police officer Edward Wagner, who retired from the NYPD in 1994 and who allegedly drove his son Christopher Wagner from Manhattan to the Bronx in order to purchase cocaine, heroin and fentanyl from Cataño. Drugs were then sold to an undercover officer. Christopher Wagner, who was a friend and neighbor to the 28-year-old overdose victim, also died during the investigation. Subsequently, Edward Wagner sold the undercover officer cocaine, heroin, boxes of bullets, a ballistic vest, a shotgun and shotgun shells.

### Five Sentenced to Prison; Drug Sales Linked to Overdoses

Five members of a Sunset Park, Brooklyn-based narcotics trafficking organization received prison sentences of up to six years for selling a variety of narcotics, including potent fentanyl, heroin and cocaine. During the investigation, two individuals overdosed on narcotics allegedly linked to the drug ring. A Staten Island woman fatally overdosed in early 2019. An autopsy in the Staten Island fatality determined the cause of death was the combined effects of fentanyl, a fentanyl analog called fluoroisobutyryl fentanyl, cocaine and morphine. Subsequently, a Brooklyn man related to two of the defendants suffered an overdose and survived. At the outset of the investigation, the defendants sold blue-tinted fentanyl to an undercover officer with the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough Brooklyn South, leading officers to dub the investigation “Operation Blue Dope.” The defendants later expanded the types of narcotics sold to heroin and cocaine.



New York Post- March 7, 2019

## California to New York Supply Chain Disrupted

An investigation that began with drug overdoses led police to uncover a Queens distribution network and a California to New York City supply chain. In a sophisticated scheme, Nassau County-based brothers Jamel and Randolph Brown allegedly teamed up with a New York City school custodian, Troy Williams, to transport large quantities of cocaine and fentanyl across the U.S. Jamel Brown made multiple trips to California to meet with members of a supply organization. Williams is charged with orchestrating these meetings. Packages containing narcotics were sent back to New York through mail delivery services. Also inside the packages were GPS devices that the trio used for tracking. Court authorized searches of properties associated with the Brown brothers yielded three guns, over \$60,000 cash and more than a pound of cocaine. Williams was arrested as he entered his vehicle outside the school where he worked. Police recovered a kilogram of fentanyl from inside the car. Members of a Queens-based distribution network were among those supplied by the trio. Undercover officers purchased cocaine and heroin from this group on approximately two-dozen occasions between November of 2018 and December of 2019.

## Drug Dealer Targeted Busy Union Square Businesses in Sales

A defendant who sold heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to an undercover NYPD officer set up the majority of his sales in the vicinity of Union Square. The defendant directed the undercover to meet him inside busy fast food restaurants, including Chipotle, McDonald's and Au Bon Pain, with most sales occurring between the hours of 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. The defendant handed narcotics to the undercover inside a bag or box, while families with young children and babies in strollers were nearby. In the largest sale, the undercover met the defendant at a Dunkin' Donuts on St. Nicholas Avenue in Harlem and paid \$3,700 for cocaine and purported heroin. Laboratory analysis determined the narcotics sold were cocaine and heroin. The defendant was sentenced to eight years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.

## Drugs and Violence

### Notorious Bronx Street Market for Drugs Dismantled

An indictment charged 14 members of a large narcotics trafficking organization with conspiracy to sell heroin and cocaine in the vicinity of a Bronx bakery following a long-term wiretap investigation. The alleged leader of the organization, Jack Acevedo, faces the top narcotics charge of Operating as a Major Trafficker. The New York Strike Force investigation was initiated in response to community complaints about the open and notorious sale and consumption of narcotics along a busy commercial stretch of 3rd Avenue in Mott Haven, as well as violent incidents. Acevedo's alleged organization took over the bakery, a legitimate business, and used it as a hub for drug trafficking. Sales were conducted on the sidewalk and inside. Members of the organization observed a strict hierarchy. A court authorized search of Acevedo's residence, which served as an alleged stash location, yielded



New York Daily News- March 22, 2020

approximately \$50,000 cash and hundreds of glassine envelopes of suspected heroin as well as ziplock bags containing suspected heroin and cocaine. Acevedo received his narcotics from multiple suppliers, including Antonio Paigne. In a court authorized search of Paigne's residence, agents and officers recovered two loaded guns and nearly a kilogram of suspected heroin and cocaine.

### Speedster Drug Suspect Nearly Ran Down Woman and Dog

A suspected drug dealer known for high-speed getaways was arrested two months after fleeing from DEA agents and nearly running down a young woman walking her dog in the Upper East Side. The close call came in August 2019 after members of a DEA surveillance team attempted to approach Arfhy "Coyote" Santos in the vicinity of Park Avenue and 97th Street as he was allegedly conducting the sale of two kilograms of purported cocaine. Santos twice smashed his car into a police vehicle as he fled the scene. Security video allegedly shows Santos drive up onto a sidewalk and come within inches of hitting a woman and her dog. Laboratory testing determined that the two kilograms Santos was selling were fake. Santos was arrested in October 2019 outside a Bronx nightclub. He had three pounds of marijuana inside his vehicle. Santos faces charges of Reckless Driving, Aggravated Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, Leaving the Scene of an Incident without Reporting, Reckless Endangerment, Criminal Possession of Marijuana and Attempted Grand Larceny. In a prior incident prosecuted by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in 2018, Santos struck and dragged a police officer who had approached his car in Times Square.



New York Daily News- November 19, 2019

### Ten Face Assault, Weapon and Drug Charges: 12 Guns Seized

Ten members of an alleged Brooklyn based criminal organization were charged with trafficking in narcotics, attempted assault and weapons possession. The investigation began following two overdoses, one of which was fatal.



10 defendants were charged after police seized 12 guns, narcotics and drug paraphenilia from a stash house.

The indictment contains charges related two incidents of shots fired in Brooklyn, including a wild shootout on August 27, 2018 in which over 20 bullets were fired in broad daylight. The indictment charges multiple members of the same family: brothers Michael Watson and Marvin Watson and their nephews Jerry Watson and Earl Watson. During the August 27, 2018 shootout, which was captured on security video, Michael and Marvin Watson emerged from a black SUV carrying weapons and exchanged fire with a rival driving a silver Lexus. Pedestrians dove for cover as Michael Watson brandished a large gun and ran after the rival's car, which sped backwards and rammed multiple vehicles. Two days later, police received another report of shots fired and observed Michael Watson speeding away from the scene. Police tracked

five of the defendants were present. A court authorized search yielded four guns, cocaine and drug paraphernalia. During the investigation by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North, the ten charged defendants allegedly coordinated with one another to make sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to customers, including 10 sales to an undercover officer. A total of 12 guns were seized.

### ***Drug Stash Worth \$4 Million and Six Guns Seized Following Overdoses***

An investigation into three overdose deaths and two non-fatal overdoses in the Bronx and Westchester led law enforcement agents to seize over 30 pounds of heroin and fentanyl with a street value of over \$4 million, as well as five handguns, an assault rifle and \$170,000 cash. Nine defendants were charged, including members of a drug distribution network and two top suppliers for the organization, Ismael Lugo and Ricardo Gonzalez. The two suppliers were present inside a drug stash location on Holland Avenue in Morris Park when members of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Border Enforcement Security Taskforce (BEST) conducted a court authorized search and seized approximately 10 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl, six guns and over \$100,000 cash. Furniture inside the stash apartment was outfitted with hidden compartments. Mechanical kilo presses used for compressing narcotics into brick form and four pounds of marijuana were also recovered. A subsequent search of Lugo's residence in Elmsford, N.Y. yielded an additional four kilograms of narcotics packaged in the same manner as those at the stash location. Members of the drug distribution network conducted more than a dozen sales to undercover officers during the investigation, including sales of heroin laced with potentially lethal fentanyl.



*Furniture outfitted with hidden traps contained narcotics and other contraband.*

# Prescription Drugs

## Queens Doctor Sentenced to 7 Years in Patients' Deaths

Dr. Lawrence Choy was sentenced to a nearly seven-year prison term on two counts of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, 27 counts of Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance and five counts of Reckless Endangerment. Three of the doctor's patients died of overdoses, including two patients whose deaths are the subject of the manslaughter charges. In pleading guilty to 34 felony counts stemming from illegal sales of prescriptions for controlled substances, Choy admitted to causing the deaths of patients Eliot Castillo, 35, and Michael Ries, 30, both of whom fatally overdosed within three days of receiving prescriptions from Choy. The five counts of Reckless Endangerment relate to five additional patients, one of whom died of an overdose. A licensed physician since 1981, Choi specialized in internal medicine and nephrology and operated a full-time medical office in Flushing. Beginning in 2012, he began issuing prescriptions for dangerous levels of narcotic drugs in high-risk combinations with other controlled substances. Choy drew patients from a wide geographic area. The investigation was conducted by SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit and Investigators Unit, the DEA's New York Strike Force and the New York City Human Resources Administration, with assistance from the Nassau County and Suffolk County Police Departments.

### Doctor sentenced to 7 years in connection to 3 patients' fatal ODs

By Rebecca Rosenberg

September 10, 2019 | 4:52p



New York Post- September 10, 2019

## Pharmacist Sentenced for Oxycodone Sales and Forged Rx's

A supervising pharmacist was sentenced to four years in prison for diverting millions of dollars in oxycodone pills from a Queens pharmacy. Victor LaPerla and a pharmacy technician allegedly conspired to fill forged prescriptions in exchange for cash at their workplace, Dale Pharmacy & Surgical Inc. in Richmond Hill, Queens. Each forged prescription was written for 180 pills of 30 mg oxycodone painkillers for a total of 2,700 pills. An unindicted coconspirator and others also made cash payments for oxycodone pills in unlabeled bottles for which no official prescription had been presented. This was done for the purpose of reselling the pills on the black market. Through search warrants at the pharmacy and LaPerla's home and phone, investigators found proof of unaccounted for prescriptions and corresponding documentation of the amount of pills that were resold. The investigation, conducted by SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit and the DEA, revealed that between March 2013 and May 2018 LaPerla filled over 855 oxycodone 30 mg prescriptions. As a result, an estimated 158,000 pills carrying a street value of up to \$4 million were diverted to the black market. In 2017 alone, LaPerla allegedly received approximately \$303,900 as a result of the scheme. LaPerla pled guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree and Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree. The pharmacy technician is awaiting trial.

## **Doctor Sentenced in Multi-Million Dollar Fraud**

Dr. Lazar Feygin received a sentence of five years in prison in connection with schemes to illegally sell prescriptions for millions of oxycodone pills, to defraud Medicaid/Medicare of millions of dollars and to commit money laundering. Feygin pled guilty to 16 felonies, including multiple counts of Conspiracy, Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance and Health Care Fraud. As operator of two medical clinics in Brooklyn, Feygin directed medical professionals and office staff to subject patients to unnecessary tests that were then fraudulently billed to Medicaid/Medicare. To induce patients to submit to these tests, Feygin and his staff illegally provided patients with prescriptions for oxycodone, an addictive opioid painkiller, for no legitimate medical purpose. In pleading guilty, Feygin admitted to directing his employees to provide oxycodone prescriptions to individuals known to be reselling pills on the street and to those using illicit drugs, such as heroin. Feygin and his staff were responsible for prescribing over 3.7 million oxycodone pills between early 2012 and early 2017 and received over \$16 million in reimbursements from Medicaid/Medicare.



*New York Post- March 11, 2019*