

### COVID Update

- More dramatic drop in cases and hospital census for COVID and percentage of people in the hospital for COVID
- Wastewater cases are decreasing
- Vaccination rate for the bivalent is up to 22%
  - Most states are under the 10%

### Opioid

- Epidemic we are following most closely
- The overdose numbers for opioid deaths are very close to what they were last year, just a touch higher
  - Last year was totally unacceptable with the magnitude of increase
  - Comparing with the 3-year average it was 20/30% higher
- Rate of per 100,000 in 2021 was 23.6 and the most improved year was 2019 with 17.7
- Fentanyl was responsible for so much – northward of 94% of toxicology reports show it
- Xylazine is a veterinary anesthetic that prolongs euphoric effects, an adulterant in all powders that are bought
  - Narcan doesn't work and there is no antidote
  - Has precipitated a whole campaign to call 911
  - July numbers came through that over 40% had xylazine (usually 20-30%)
  - EMTs are leaving behind packs that have literature, Narcan, and fentanyl test strips
- Vending machine approach to Narcan – ability to find it in a machine
  - In its infancy
- Part of the Governor's 10-point plan on public safety
- Stimulants are contributing to more deaths
  - Opioid death but with methamphetamine was included
  - Almost all cocaine deaths have fentanyl as well
    - About 48% of deaths included it
- Opioid settlement council met
  - Number of settlements is increasing which means that the number of millions of dollars coming into the state will be increasing
  - Started with \$3 million, then \$6 million
  - Question will be how do we spend that wisely
    - Want to spend more on Narcan because it has gotten more expensive and want to get that out

### Influenza

- Uptake is now 28%, which is good but not great
- Time to get your flu shot is now
- Migration up the Atlantic coast is coming up here

### Questions and Answers

**I've seen people who say they've had Covid like illness, now have long Covid like symptoms, but either never tested or had negative PCR or antigen tests. Are there commercially available, reliable tests that help distinguish antibodies from immunization vs infection - spike protein vs nucleocapsid for instance?**

**ML:** I think the pertinent word in that is commercially available, because there are tests. But nothing has been authorized by the FDA, so it gets a little complicated. Long COVID is something more clinicians are getting more familiar with. Long COVID will become the new epidemic post covid. We have to stay tuned.

**I am wondering how to get that message out to cocaine users that they should have Narcan on hand. I've seen a few cocaine/fentanyl cases that had never used an opiate before and had no idea fentanyl was present in the cocaine**

**ML:** Trying to get messages out is with all our partners - Treatment provider, law enforcement, etc. that any overdose is potentially a mixture of a whole bunch of stuff. Immediate concern is xylazine. There are people that are looking for the combination as opposed to people that are just looking to buy cocaine and they get their 1<sup>st</sup> fentanyl dose, and it is a real challenge.

**Are Fentanyl test strips available everywhere Narcan is available?**

**ML:** They are available anywhere that a harm reduction pack is available. Test the material, not just the test strip, but will a small dose and don't inject alone. Test strips are going to have diminishing returns overtime.

**Don't consume or inject alone. Safe injection sites. VMS is potentially speaking about it at the February board meeting. Has there been more discussion about sites at the state level?**

**ML:** There is a lot of literature out about those sites and the US has Rhode Island and New York with sites, but there are no peer reviewed articles on how efficient they are. The question will be: will it decrease in death? Connect people with treatment and services? How does it work in a rural environment? That we have no answers to. We have an open mind, but don't see why we should spend millions of dollars without evidence yet.

**Stimulant prescriptions. Parents have been using their children's prescriptions.**

**ML:** Haven't heard that direction as much, but I am sure we will hear about it in the news.