

# ***Moving beyond the crisis cycle: A drug policy future***

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Organization of American States (OAS)*

Civil Society Dialogue

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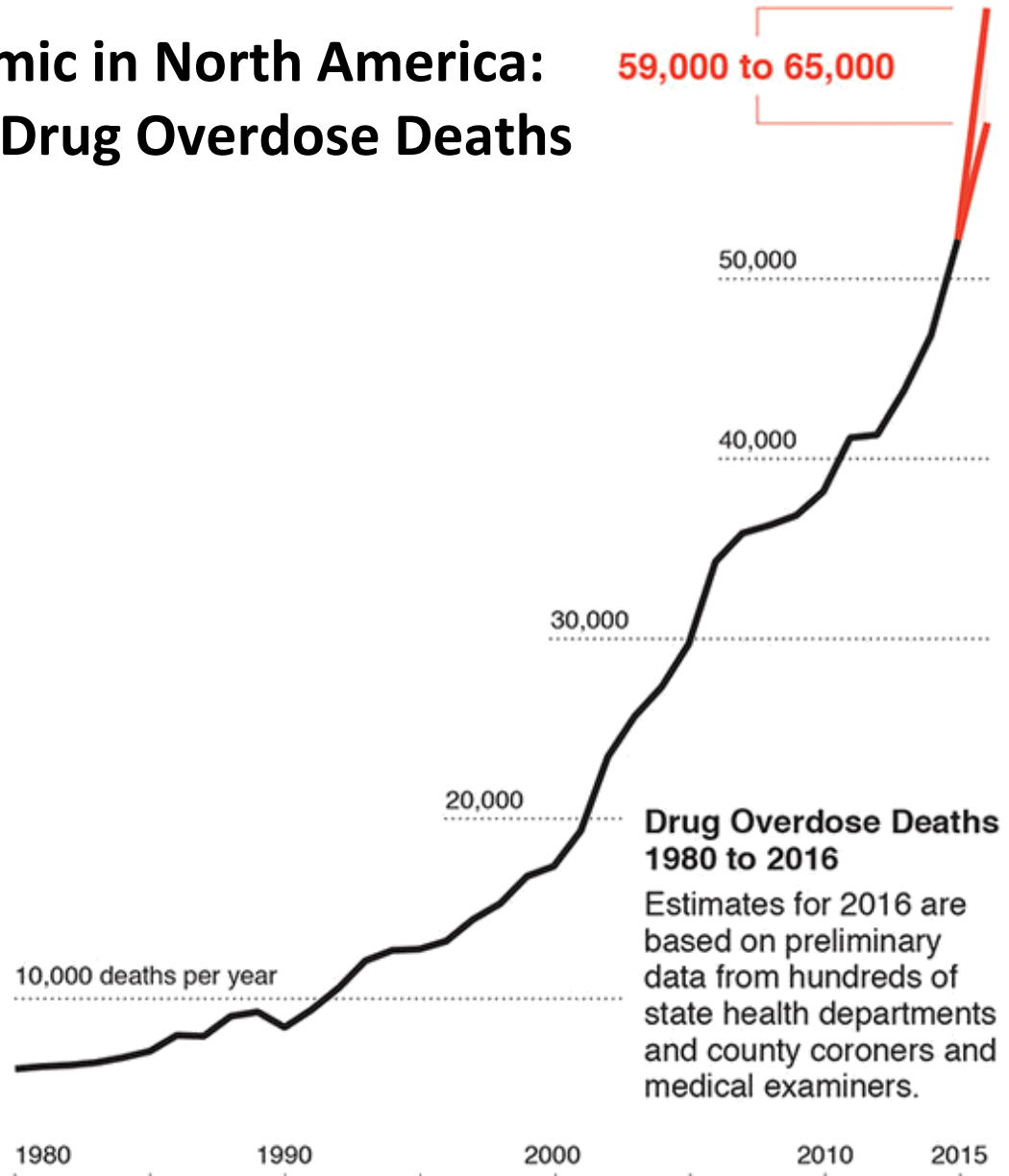
# The Opioid Epidemic in North America: Sharp Increases in Drug Overdose Deaths



## B.C. opioid crisis: Province on pace for more than 1,400 overdose deaths in 2017

SCOTT BROWN  
More from Scott Brown

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# This is no longer a crisis of drug use

- Over-reliance on supply reduction as a form of drug prevention
- Global in scope
- Irreversible

***...This is a crisis of contamination***

# A predictable 'next step' in opioid trafficking

- Opium
- Laudanum
- Heroin
- Fentanyl
- Carfentanil
- ....?????

# Is fentanyl here to stay?

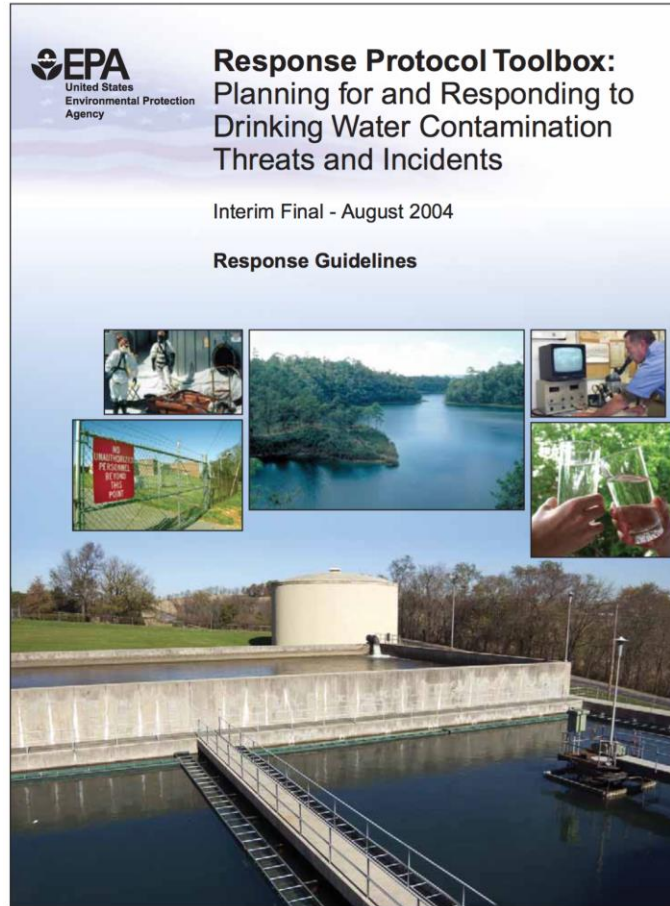
- Difficult to turn back market efficiencies
- Is fentanyl affecting market size?
- Likely that left unchecked this will be the new normal

# How to treat contamination?

- We have a crisis of toxic supply
- Supply has overwhelmed policy and interventional levers
- *BUT*: There is a playbook

# This is not the first case

*Protocols exist – we just need to adapt them.*

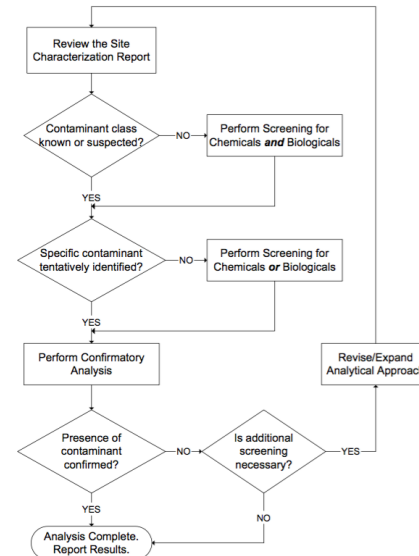




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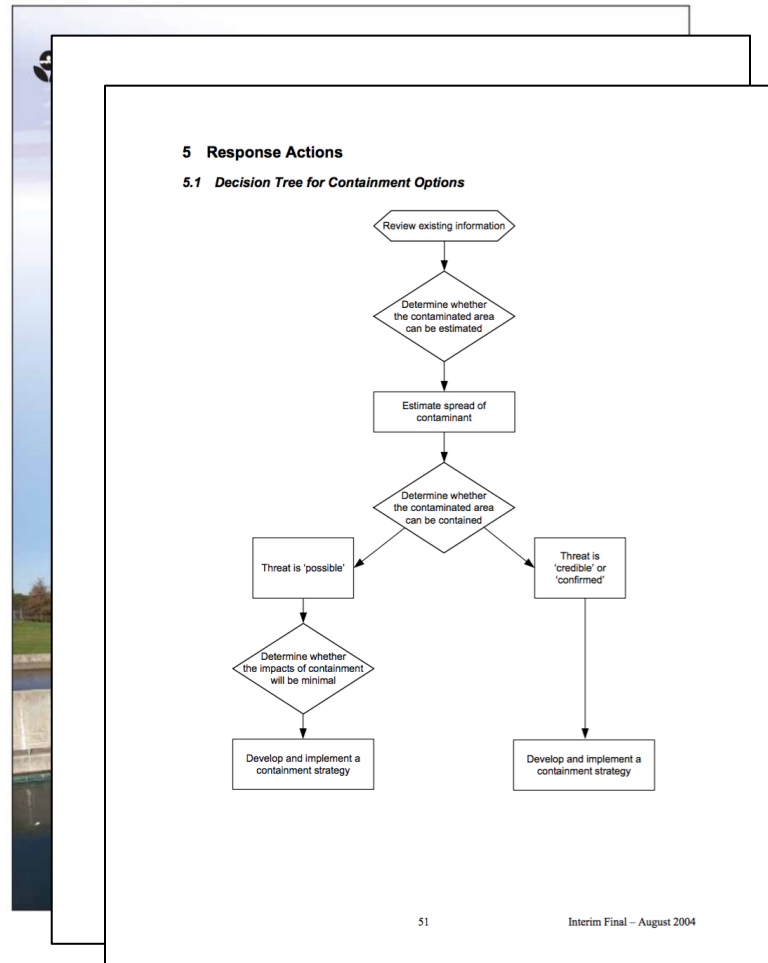
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#### 4.2 General Approach for Analysis of Unknowns in Water



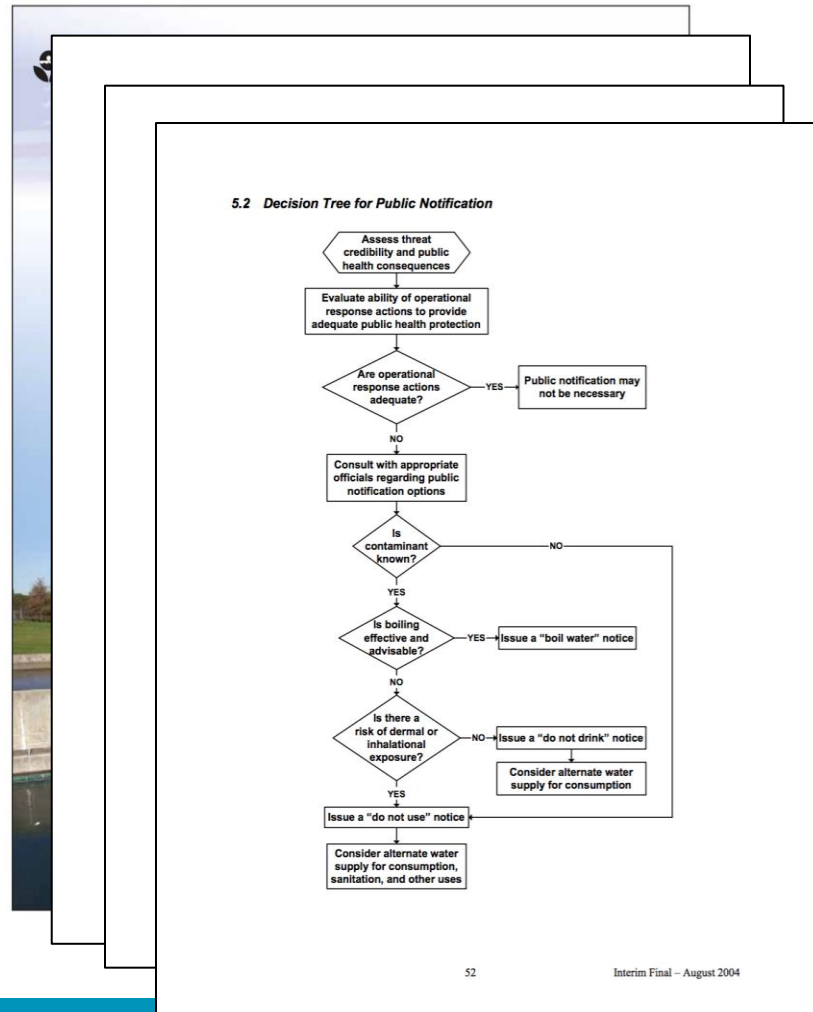
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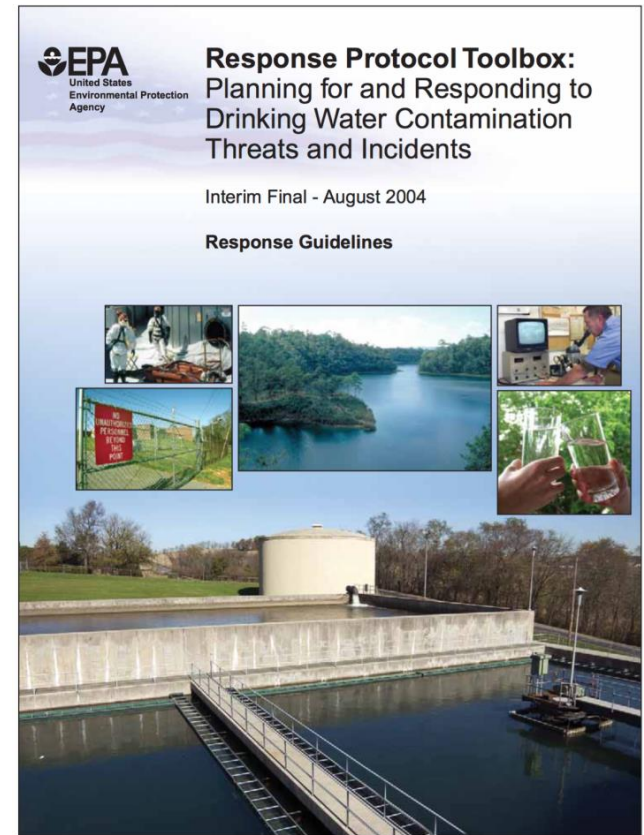
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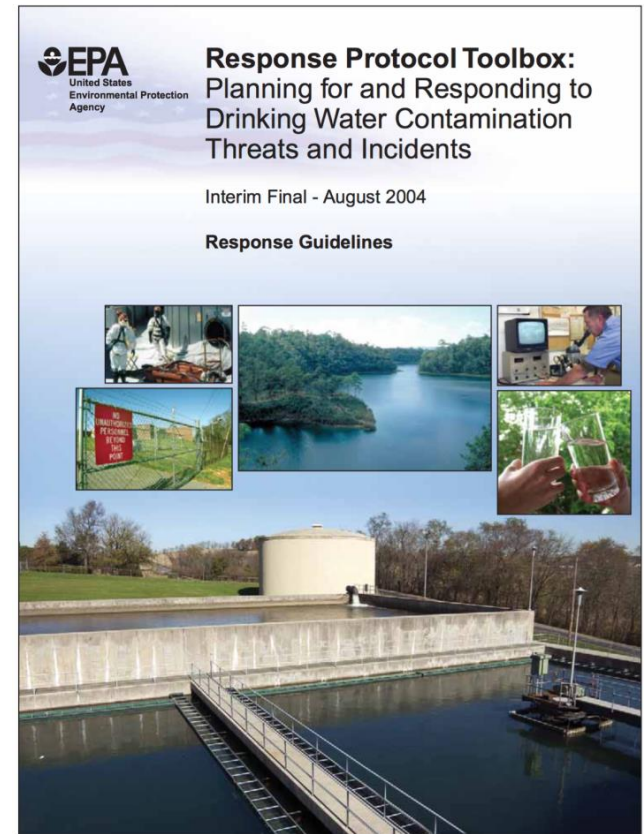
# Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 1:** Communicate risk
- **Step 2:** Treat poisonings
- **Step 3:** Remove contaminants
- **Step 4:** Replenish supply



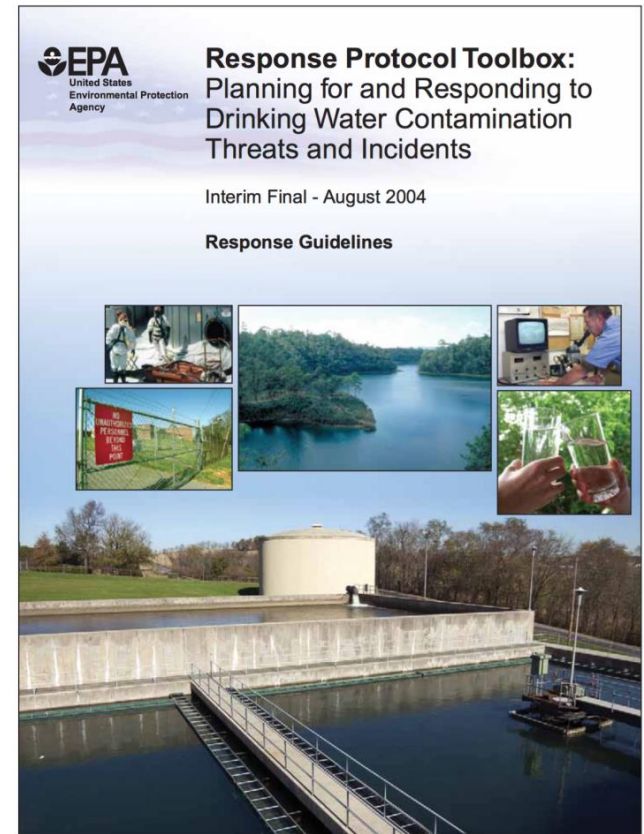
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- **Step 1: *Communicate risk***
  - Engagement with people relying on supply
  - Based on peer knowledge
  - Must be reliable + trustworthy
  - Must be devoid of moralizing
    - “It’s your fault you drank poisoned water”



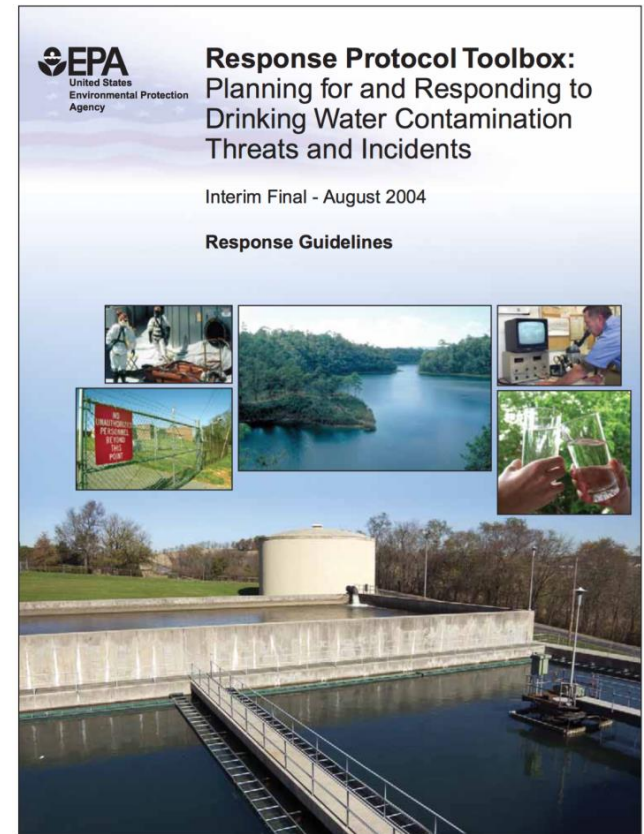
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- **Step 2: *Treat poisonings***
  - Oxygen, naloxone
  - Medical attention (SIF, OPS)
  - Connecting with ‘hidden’ populations



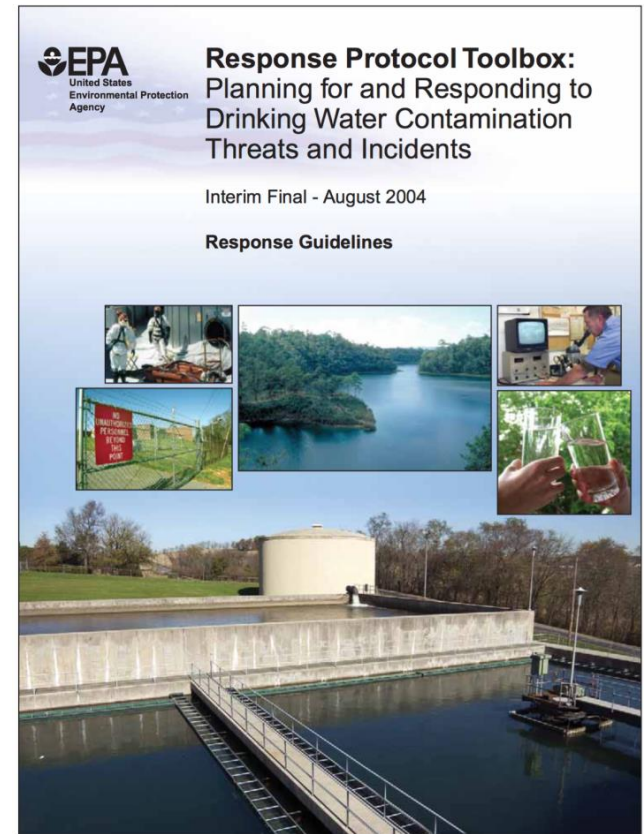
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- **Step 3: Remove contaminants**
  - Street drug checking
    - Identify toxic substances
    - Knock on effect if person is using with a friend or is dealing
    - Increases ‘risk competency’
    - Only intervention that mitigates risk of OD *prior* to drug use



# Responding to contamination: 4 steps

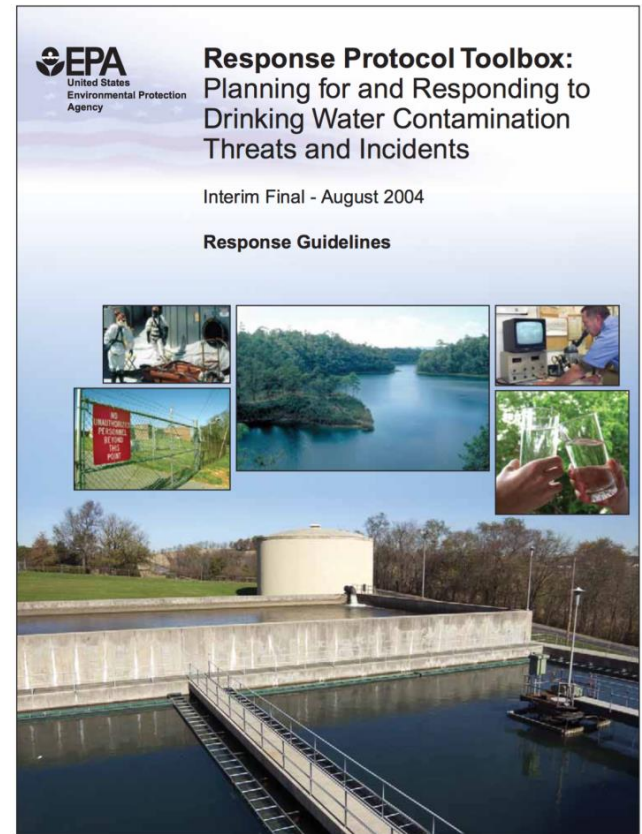
- **Step 4: Replenish supply**
  - Not enough to respond to poisoning
  - New normal  $\neq$  Business as usual
    - “Oh well, I guess the water’s poisoned from now on”
  - Need to introduce stasis to the market





# Responding to contamination: 4 steps

- **Step 4, con't: Replenish supply**
  - Medication-assisted treatment
    - Methadone
    - Buprenorphine
    - Suboxone
  - Prescription heroin
  - Standard-dose opioids



# Responding to contamination: Barriers

- We have most of the tools we need to respond to the OD crisis
- Three major barriers remain:
  1. Stigma
  2. Scale-up
  3. Political will

# How do we move forward?

- *Change starts with a realization that we are already halfway there*
  - Heroin prescription, medication-assisted treatment, SIF, street drug checking: de facto ‘micro-regulation’
  - Consider that multiple regulatory structures exist:
    - recreational cannabis vs. heroin prescription
- *Need to confront where our policies are taking us*

# Conclusions

- We need to scale up the tools we already have
- Scale up happens by addressing stigma
- Stigma can be reduced through policy change
- Policy change happens by recognizing what already exists: a poor system of regulation

# Questions?

*Thanks for listening.*

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