



The University of Washington(UW) has [released a study](#) that measured the concentrations of fentanyl and methamphetamine in air and on surfaces in trains and buses in Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon.

While the presence of drugs in a public place may initially seem alarming, we would like to try to put this data in perspective. As physicians who are medical toxicologists and Medical Directors of the Poison Centers of Washington and Oregon, we find that the results of the study are no surprise. Smoking in a public place produces very small amounts of that substance and we can identify those substances in the air and on surfaces with modern laboratory methods.

Fortunately, the amount of drugs that were detected in this study are extremely small. Exposures to the quantities of drug demonstrated in this study are too small to produce physical effects from a short-term exposure that a rider would experience. Therefore, individuals who use public transportation for travel needs should continue to feel safe doing so.

The UW study highlights the crisis that communities across the Pacific Northwest and the country are facing - an epidemic of opioid and stimulant use. Our communities must work to address the drivers of substance use and to support and provide help to those with substance use disorders to reach long-term recovery.

This study aimed to determine if drugs could be detected in public transit, and it can. This is reflective of the volume of drug use currently in our communities and a reminder for the community to develop solutions to decrease drug use over the long term.

Scott Phillips MD, FACP, FACMT, FAACT  
Executive/Medical Director  
Washington Poison Center  
155 NE 100th St, Ste 100  
Seattle, WA 98125  
206-517-2356  
sphillips@wapc.org

Robert G. Hendrickson, MD, FACMT, FAACT  
Program Director, Fellowship in Medical Toxicology  
Medical Director, Oregon Poison Center  
Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine  
Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU)  
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, CSB 550  
Portland, Oregon 97239  
503 494 9495  
hendriro@ohsu.edu