

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

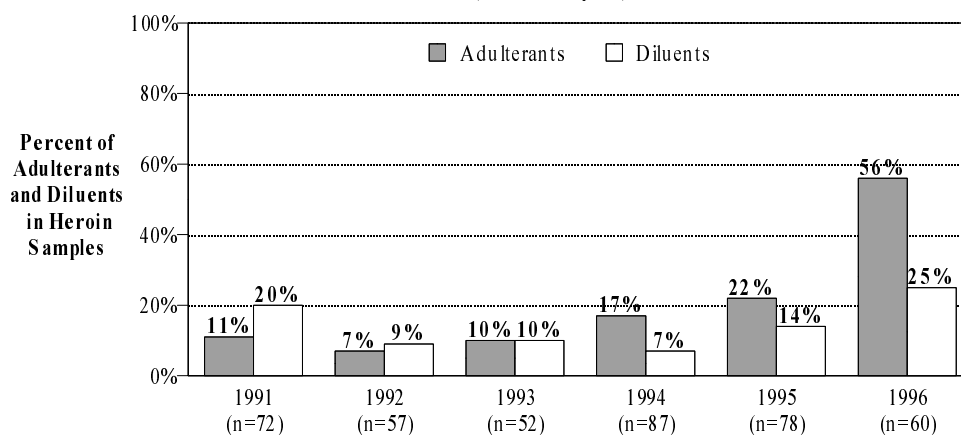
University of Maryland, College Park

Alarming Increase of Adulterants in Heroin in New York City

According to a study of modifications in the “cutting” of heroin from 1991-1996, the proportion of adulterants, pharmacologically active or psychoactive substances, found in street heroin from New York City has significantly increased. Two of the adulterants used, diphenhydramine and theophylline, appear to increase the intranasal absorption of heroin into the bloodstream and thus enhance the drug’s psychoactive effects. This may, in turn, increase the probability of heroin dependence. Additionally, heroin containing greater amounts of adulterants is less soluble and may clog needles and syringes, which may lead to the sharing of needles. According to the author, “The re-engineering of heroin cuts may have more far-reaching adverse health and addiction effects than can be fully assessed at this time” (p. 378).

**Percentage of Heroin Samples Containing Three or More Adulterants or Diluents,
New York City, 1991-1996**

(N=406 samples)



NOTE: Findings are based on an analysis of 406 chemical assays of street bags of heroin purchased in New York City by informants for the Drug Enforcement Administration, Domestic Impurities Program. Observations of injecting drug users and interviews with street dealers were used to augment forensic analysis.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Furst, R. Terry, “The Re-engineering of Heroin: An Emerging Heroin ‘Cutting’ Trend in New York City,” *Addiction Research* 8(4):357-379, 2000. For more information, please contact Dr. R. Terry Furst at 646-728-4615.

• 301-403-8329 (voice) • 301-403-8342 (fax) • CESAR@cesar.umd.edu • www.cesar.umd.edu •

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