

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

January 29, 1979

Subject: PROPOXYPHENE: TOXICITY STUDY 1978-79

Further to current reports concerning the incidence of propoxyphene, in postmortem medico-legal investigation, a study has been undertaken during the past several weeks by Drs. Bryan S. Finkle, James C. Garriott, Institute of Forensic Sciences, Dallas, Richard F. Shaw, San Diego County Coroner's Office and Yale Caplan, State of Maryland Medical Examiner's Office, Baltimore. The study included seven site visits and a telephone survey of six additional Medical Examiner-coroner offices covering some major metropolitan areas and states across the United States. The general purpose of these activities was to assess propoxyphene in the forensic toxicology of drug fatalities but specifically to:

1. Evaluate the accuracy of the data on DPX deaths in Dr. Sidney Wolfe's letter to HEW Secretary Califano dated Nov. 21, 1978.
2. Critique the method and cases which are reported to the DAWN data collection system.
3. Consider how (2) differs from the Finkle-McCloskey system of case evaluation.
4. Determine if Heroin is responsible for more deaths than propoxyphene.
5. What other drugs, particularly analgesics, outweigh Heroin in this context.

The following summarizes the findings:

A. Telephone Survey

(i) PHILADELPHIA (City and County)

In 1974 this site had 14.0/10⁶ population DPX associated cases, i.e., 28 cases. Cases peaked to a maximum in 1975 and have since decreased steadily: 1975-38, 1976-25, 1977-25, 1978-20.

Propoxyphene - DPX

Tricyclic Antidepressants - TADS