**The fentanyl crisis in the U.S.**

**What is fentanyl?**

* Synthetic opioid, that is used in pain management and anaesthesia
* Delivered via intravenous or transdermal paths
* Problem: high abuse potential
* Risk: rapid onset of rigidity in critical muscle groups including respiration 🡪 death

**Opioid crisis**

* Many drug problems in the U.S. over the last century, three waves of opioid overdose deaths
* In 2022, only in the U.S., about 108.000 people died from drug overdose, 82.000 of the involved opioids 🡪 highest number of opioid deaths per capita
* Number of deaths particularly high among people ages 24 to 35
* Reasons: increased prescription of opioids, increased demand for opioid for self-medication, greater consumption of opioids from illegal sources, people are not aware of the risk to become dependent
* Why fentanyl? Potency and cheap production (99 percent cheaper than heroin)

**Problems/ Impact on Health System**

* Increased amount of people with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)
* Increased need of therapy
* Increased incidence of related diseases (Hepatitis C and HIV)

**Measures**

* Less prescription of opioids
* Change in strategies concerning supply control
* Three laws between 2016 and 2018: CARA 2016, 21st Century Cures Act 2016, SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act 2018
* Framework of the HHS in 2017: improved access to service for opioid addiction prevention
* Bars and restaurants offer free fentanyl test and Naracan
* Invest more in non-pharmacological treatments in case of mental health problems: educational prevention programs, psychotherapy, coping skills

**Conclusion**

“Without a doubt, fentanyl is a drug that warrants consideration due to the nature of its effects; despite its significant potential in various fields of medicine, recreational use of this substance carries greater risks than those associated with other drugs. The interplay between drug accessibility and user motivations underscores the urgent need for educational efforts to mitigate the impact of this potent opioid on society.” Alejandro Borrego-Ruiz

**Vocabulary**

Rigidity = Starrheit

Dizziness = Schwindel

Bend over = sich nach vorne beugen

Prescription = Verschreibung