

TOXTALK

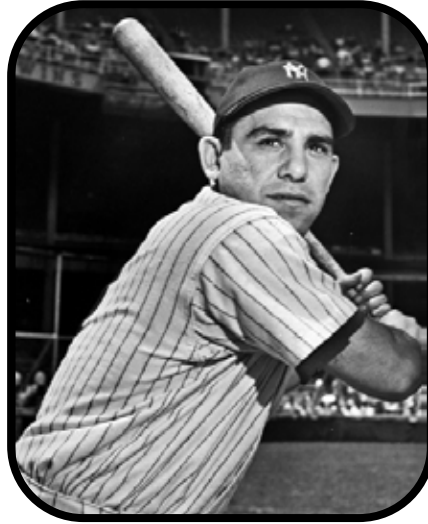


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is official, I miss travel. I miss the scratchy hotel towels. I miss finding my hotel key in the washing machine after I return home. I miss the people watching in the airport and getting my shoes shined in the Detroit airport at the stand across from gate D18. I miss exploring new destinations and meeting up with friends and family. More importantly, I miss you all. I am so thankful I have been able to see many of you during the recent Zoom meetings for the various SOFT committees. I truly appreciate the committee chairs taking the time to organize the virtual meetings. The more meetings I was able to attend, the more impressed I've become with all of you. Your contributions to the committees are inspiring and you are what makes SOFT such an incredible organization.

Planning for the SOFT 2021 meeting in Nashville is coming along. I know many



“The towels were so thick there I could hardly close my suitcase” – Yogi Berra

of you have concerns about travel, your agency's policies on travel during Covid and much more. Beth and CC, as well as the Planning Committee, are monitoring updates as they are announced by the CDC and other public health officials. Very soon, the SOFT Office will be launching a Covid informational site that will be specific for the SOFT meeting. As much as we would love to plan for every potential scenario, we simply cannot do that, so we are taking things day by day.

The Board continues to meet monthly and discuss the concerns of the mem-

TOXTALK

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	1-2
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK	2
SOFT TREASURER REPORT	3
ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE - NASHVILLE	4-5
AAFS AND JAT INFORMATION	6
YOUNG FORENSIC TOXICOLOGISTS (YFT COMMITTEE)	7
IN MEMORIAM	8
PUBLIC HEALTH LABS	9
FROM THE LITERATURE	10
NFLIS ANNOUNCEMENT	11
MENTORING COMMITTEE	12-13
SOFT INFORMATION	14

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

bership when it comes to Covid and our annual meeting as well as the operations of the organization. I am honored to work with the SOFT Board members, the discussions and feedback are always insightful and it shows how much they care about the organization. We are very pleased to see so much activity occurring for the Continuing Education Committee, many SOFT members have reached out wanting to plan a virtual Con Ed training. I am looking forward to seeing what topics are proposed and presented!

The Toxicology Resource Committee has been compiling a survey which will be sent around to as many forensic toxicology laboratories as we were able to identify. The committee is working to understand the needs of each laboratory and locate a variety of areas that will be resources for laboratories such as grant solicitations and continuing education opportunities. We know that each laboratories' needs can be very different and we hope our survey is able to assist and support the work in our field.

During this issue, I am very pleased to introduce you to a few more of my colleagues at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. Please take a moment to "meet" them and do not hesitate to contact them and introduce yourself.

Stay safe and healthy everyone!



AMY MILES, B.S.
SOFT PRESIDENT

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Submitted by: Beth Olson, SOFT Executive Director
beth@soft-tox.org



Over the past few months, the SOFT office, Board of Directors and the Nashville Planning Committee have received many questions about whether we will be meeting in person this year, and I'd like to address some of your questions and concerns here.

We WILL be holding an in-person SOFT meeting in Nashville, TN, September 26-October 1, 2021. Of course, if the past 14 months have taught us anything, it's that we can't predict the future. That being said, if the COVID-19 situation, and the restrictions of local, state and federal guidelines for COVID-19 safety stay the same or improve, we will be holding our annual meeting in person as planned.

We understand that some organizations and agencies are still bound by travel restrictions, although we hear from our membership that these restrictions

have begun to lift in some areas. Due to potential travel and budget restrictions, we are prepared for a meeting that may have fewer attendees than a usual SOFT meeting (although we will be prepared to handle a full-sized crowd if that's what we end up with!).

Exhibitor and sponsor participation for this year's meeting is excellent. We currently have about 80% of the exhibitors as we would in a usual year, and we still have exhibitors who are reserving booths, so we estimate about 90% participation from our exhibitors. One exciting item to note is that we have 100% participation from our sponsors!

This year we received 14 workshop proposals – the most we've had in any year that was not a joint meeting.

Since 2020, the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center has already hosted meetings and conferences with more than 1,000 attendees, with hundreds of meetings and conferences planned at the property between now and the opening date of our meeting.

While CC and I, the Board and the Planning Committee understand the uncertainty we all face in this age of COVID-19, our hope is to reassure you that we are moving full steam ahead

with the planning of the 2021 SOFT Annual Meeting.

We want our members to be comfortable with the precautions that are being taken to ensure the safety of our attendees at this year's meeting. To keep you up-to-date, we have launched a COVID-19 information page on the SOFT website to coincide with the opening of meeting registration and the hotel room block on Monday, May 3. We will continue to update this web page monthly with our plans and protocols that will inevitably change based on local, state, and federal guidelines over the next several months. As part of the registration process, we ask that all attendees agree to follow the protocols that are in place at the time of the meeting. Our goal is for everyone to feel as safe as possible and to have a positive experience finally gathering together after not seeing each other for nearly two years.

We hope that you will plan to attend our Nashville meeting – it's bound to be one to remember!



BETH OLSON, MBA
SOFT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SOFT TREASURER REPORT

Submitted by: Tate Yeatman M.S., F-ABFT
yeatmand@pbso.org



At the interim board meeting held during the virtual AAFS meeting, the board unanimously approved the 2021 budget. The approved budget takes into consideration the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on attendance at the annual meeting in Nashville. The Finance Committee will continue to work diligently in conjunction with Executive Director Beth Olson to ensure SOFT remains in a strong financial position. Current initiatives include conversion to 501c3 nonprofit status positioning SOFT for significant tax exemptions in the future and growth of SOFT's reserve accounts through the development of low-risk investment strategies.

I encourage you to review the budget below. **If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.** Thank you again for the opportunity to serve SOFT.

TATE YEATMAN M.S., F-ABFT
SOFT TREASURER

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Tate Yeatman, Chair

Robert Sears, Past Treasurer

Beth Olson

Suman Rana

Bill Johnson

Joe Saddy

Aya Chan-Hosokawa

Rusty Lewis

FY2021 Approved Budget	
REVENUE	
	Budget
Membership	\$144,000
Annual Meeting	\$828,339
Merchandise	\$0
Advertising	\$0
Continuing Education	\$10,000
Contributions	\$3,000
Interest	\$750
Total Revenue	\$986,089
EXPENDITURES	
Payroll	\$157,088
Occupancy	\$4,000
Office	\$1,800
Administrative Expenses	\$81,000
Membership	\$7,500
Insurance	\$11,073
Appreciation Gifts	\$1,000
Legal and Professional Services	\$10,850
Meals and Entertainment	\$500
Awards	\$12,000
Annual Meeting	\$776,865
Merchandise	\$0
Board and Committees	\$48,000
Bank Charges	\$7,500
Total Expense	\$1,119,176
Net Income/(Loss)	(\$133,087)



ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE - NASHVILLE, TN

Spring is our favorite time of year in Nashville; cherry trees are blooming, the weather is warm, and people are out enjoying the sunshine. Spring also means our meeting is inching closer! We are excited to share that we have selected a plenary speaker, Dr. Matthew Johnson, of the Center for Psychedelic & Consciousness Research at Johns Hopkins University. We're confident Dr. Johnson will give a great presentation and that his work will be of interest to our fellow SOFT members. We've also selected the location for our off-site event – Pinewood Social. It's a fun venue with excellent food and drinks located a short walk from the bright lights of Broadway in downtown Nashville. After the event, you will have the opportunity to explore downtown Music City!

In other news, our Workshop Coordinators, Scientific Program Chairs, and JAT Special Issue Editor have

been hard at work. Thanks to your submissions, this year's Special Issue Editor, Dr. Alex Krotulski, guarantees that this issue of JAT will be packed with exciting scientific content! Workshop Coordinators, Dr. Jarrad Wagner and Dr. Curt Harper, have put together a full slate of workshops to meet your continuing education needs. Scientific Program Chairs, Dr. Rebecca Hartman and Dr. Ken Ferslew are staying busy building their team of abstract reviewers. If you haven't submitted your abstract yet, you have until May 10th to do so. We are very excited to see the program come together!

For those of you anxious to plan your trip to SOFT 2021, the room block and registration are now open! We are looking forward to seeing you all this fall!

Erin and Jen

2021 HOSTS



JEN COLBY



ERIN KARSCHNER

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM COORDINATORS

KEN FERSLEW
REBECCA HARTMAN

WORKSHOP PROGRAM COORDINATORS

JARRAD WAGNER
CURT HARPER

EXHIBITOR LIAISON
LIZ KIELY

FOOD AND BEVERAGE
ANN MARIE GORDON
DENICE TEEM
DELISA DOWNEY
CARL WOLF

YFT CHAIR
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VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS
DAWN SWINEY
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MOBILE APPLICATION
RUSTY LEWIS
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SUNDAY SAENZ

AV COORDINATOR
FRANK WALLACE

FUN RUN COORDINATORS
MEGAN JACKSON
DARCIE DUCKWORTH

JAT SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR
ALEX KROTULSKI

2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

REGISTER HERE

HOTEL ROOM BLOCK

EXHIBITOR INFORMATION

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- ERA/YSMA Winners Announced, May 1, 2021
- Registration and Hotel Room Block Open, May 3, 2021
- Abstract Submission Deadline, May 10, 2021
- Registration Deadline to Avoid Late Fee, August 2, 2021
- Registration Deadline to Avoid On-Site Registration Fee, Sept. 1, 2021

SOFT 2021 PLENARY SPEAKER MATTHEW W. JOHNSON, PH.D. PROFESSOR

Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/profiles/details/matthew-johnson>

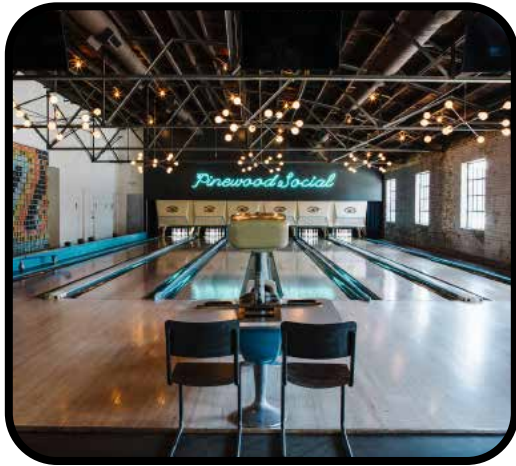
SEPTEMBER 26–OCTOBER 1, 2021



ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE - NASHVILLE, TN

PINEWOOD SOCIAL - OFFSITE EVENT

BROADWAY - NASHVILLE, TN



Congratulations to our 2021 ERA and YSMA Winners! Look for a full bio and write up on our winners and their reserach in the next issue of ToxTalk!

ERA-Doctorate: Kaitlyn Palmquist

ERA-Masters: Erica Sales

SEE YOU IN NASHVILLE!

2021 HOSTS



JEN COLBY



ERIN KARSCHNER

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM COORDINATORS

KEN FERSLEW
REBECCA HARTMAN

WORKSHOP PROGRAM COORDINATORS

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ALEX KROTULSKI

2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 26-OCTOBER 1, 2021



AAFS Toxicology Section Leadership: Looking for Individuals Wanting to Get Involved

Submitted by: AAFS Toxicology Section Leadership
Sabra Jones, Chair
Madeline Swortwood, Secretary
Mandi Mohr, Scientific Chair
Diane Boland, Scientific Co-Chair

Are you looking to get involved with professional service but are not sure how? The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Toxicology Section is hoping to increase engagement and opportunities for those interested in serving. We are looking for motivated individuals who might want to assist the section through a variety of opportunities such as, serving on a committee, moderators, abstract reviewers, or as a member of the Academy Cup team. Interested individuals are requested to fill out

this Google Document and include information related to their current membership status as well as a 250-word description about their goals for service to the section as well as reasons for wanting to be involved. Please note, filling out the requested information does not guarantee placement on a committee or a future spot in section leadership, but may help to increase section involvement and assist members with meeting membership promotion requirements. It is never too soon

to think about promoting to the next membership status! Visit AAFS Toxicology Section Membership page to learn more about the requirements.



SECTION POLL

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

MEMBERSHIP

**DON'T
MISS AN
ISSUE!**

**SEND YOUR ADDRESS UPDATES
TO THE SOFT OFFICE SO WE CAN
UPDATE YOUR JAT ACCOUNT**

email cc watson in the SOFT office to update your
address cc@soft-tox.org



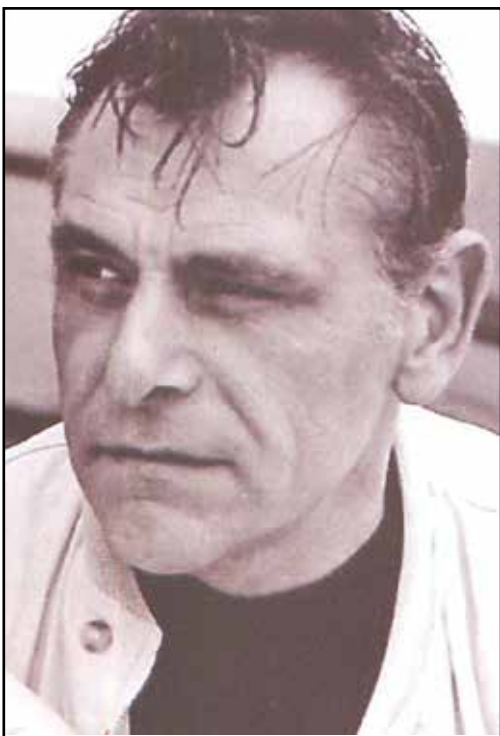
YOUNG FORENSIC TOXICOLOGISTS (YFT)

Hello SOFT members!

Thank you to all that submitted an abstract for SOFT 2021! YFT would like to remind you that you applicants may be eligible to receive the Leo Dal Cortivo Award! This award is in honor of Dr. Leo Dal Cortivo, who was a well-respected forensic toxicologist, and former Chief Toxicologist and Director of Forensic Science Laboratories in Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. The family of Dr. Dal Cortivo has set up the Leo Dal Cortivo Memorial Fund, allowing the YFT committee to present \$1000 to two award recipients annually: one for best poster presentation and one for best platform (oral) presentation. In addition to \$1000, the winners will also receive complimentary registration at a future SOFT meeting.

The eligibility requirements are:

- Must be 41 years old or younger at the time of the meeting
- Must have an accepted abstract



for either poster or platform presentation. If more than one eligible abstract is accepted, you can choose only one to be considered.

- Must be the first and presenting author on the abstract
- Must be a SOFT member. If you are not a SOFT member, at least one author on the abstract must be a SOFT member.

We can not wait to review your submissions!

Any questions, please email

Elisa Shoff
eshoff@miamidade.gov

Erin Strickland
erin.strickland@ifs.hctx.net

Leo Dal Cortivo was born on September 16, 1928 in New York city and passed away on December 15, 2011

Dr. Cortivo was one of the founding member of SOFT and we are grateful for his many contributions to our field and SOFT as an organization. We are honored to help his memory live on through the Leo Dal Cortivo Award.

Dr. Dal Cortivo's family created biography website that can be viewed [HERE](#)

"Leo is missed greatly by both his families...his relatives and his toxicology family."



YFT Committee Chair
Vanessa Meneses

Vice Chair
Amanda Rausch

Secretary
Marissa Finkelstein

Immediate Past Chair
Kevin Shanks

Members
Whitney Brown
David Cook
Sara Dempsey
Kristin Kahl
Alex Krotulski
Kayla Neuman
Elisa Shoff



IN MEMORIAM

Dear SOFT Family and Friends,

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of former SOFT President, Everett T. Solomons Ph.D., E/ABFT. Dr. Solomons was one of the founding members of SOFT.

A service will be held on May 29, 2021 in Crossville, TN.

Please enjoy the poem below that was submitted by Dr. Horton McCurdy.



Ode to Everett (A true story)

By: Horton McCurdy, Ph.D., F-ABFT

Everett always said that he wanted the world to see
No matter the endeavor, he would be the best he could be.
Legend has it he was called as an expert to testify
On a murder trial that would electrify
About a Black Widow who had learned a new trick
In how to poison her husbands with Arsenic.
Everett said this was a really easy thing to do.
Arsenic was tasteless and odorless too.
The defense then jumped up full of vile
Shaking his finger at him all the while.
“You mean this jury should consider and look
At something you read out of a textbook!”
“No, sir,” he replied. “That’s not true at all.
You see, I was prepared not to take a fall
On anything I hadn’t experienced on my own
Or to testify on anything I hadn’t already known.
So, I prepared in my lab a fatal dose of what it’s about
Swished it around my mouth and then spit it out.
So, I would certainly know that in court I could espouse.
That I could not taste or smell it, and so neither could her spouse.”
The jury then deliberated and based on that evidentiary
Gave her a life sentence in the local penitentiary.

Public Health Laboratories Embrace Opioids Biosurveillance – An update on the APHL OBTF

Nicholas Ancona, MPH
Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)
Specialist, Opioids Biosurveillance
nicholas.ancona@aphl.org

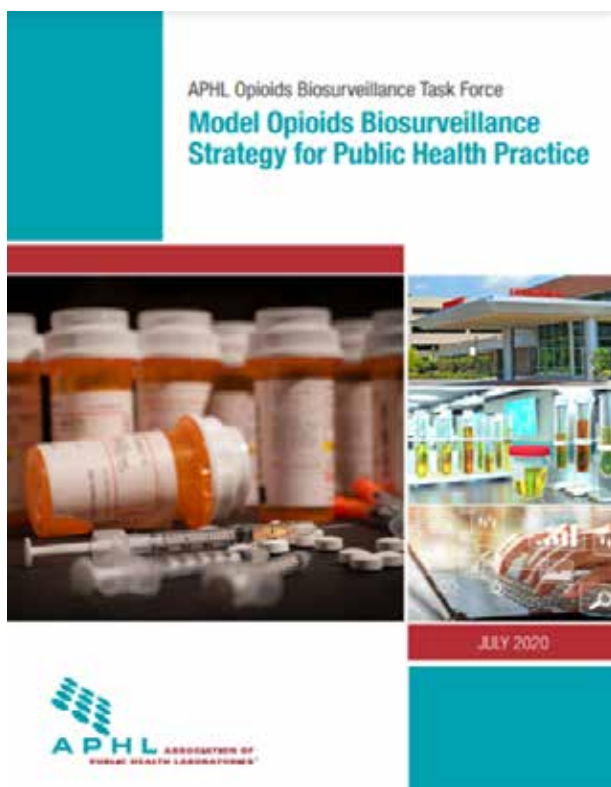
In early 2019, APHL established the Opioids Biosurveillance Task Force (OBTF), a multi-disciplinary team of subject matter experts and public health officials focused on developing a growing public health laboratory role in the persistent opioid overdose epidemic – supplementing existing overdose surveillance infrastructure through the provision of timely and reliable laboratory confirmation of the substances involved in non-fatal opioid overdose cases. Chaired by Dr. Ewa King (Director, Rhode Island State Health Laboratories), the OBTF meets regularly and sets priorities on an annual basis. Dr. Ewa King has served as a champion for opioids biosurveillance while Rhode Island’s program has continued to expand. “The Rhode Island Department of Health exercised its regulatory authority to mandate the submission of biological specimens (urine samples)

to the state laboratory, but it was the relationships with individual hospital laboratories that made it work.” The Rhode Island State Health Laboratories has been collecting and testing clinical specimens as part of their biosurveillance program since July 2019, and initial findings from their data will be published in Spring 2021.

To date, the OBTF has developed guidance for public health laboratories at various stages of developing and implementing opioids biosurveillance programs alongside stakeholders in their respective jurisdictions. Examples include the Model Opioids Biosurveillance Strategy for Public Health Practice and Fundamentals of Fentanyl Safety in Public Health Laboratory Settings (pictured below). These resources outline considerations for program design, implementation, and evaluation and address

laboratory safety concerns.

In 2020, the OBTF began exploring the public health laboratory role in surveillance of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). APHL added several new members with expertise in neonatal drug testing, newborn screening, NAS epidemiology and surveillance, pediatrics/neonatology, obstetrics/gynecology, and state maternal/child health programs to the OBTF in support of this effort. The OBTF is currently developing a statement which will provide context into the landscape of NAS surveillance data and its utility, existing neonatal drug testing methods, and ethical, social, and legal implications of laboratory-based NAS surveillance.



Visit aphl.org/opioids for more information on the APHL OBTF and the APHL Opioids Biosurveillance program.



Submitted by: Kevin G. Shanks, M.S., D-ABFT-FT
Axis Forensic Toxicology
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Journal of Forensic Sciences
Volume 66, Issue 2
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.14623>

Brorphine – Investigation and Quantitation of a New Potent Synthetic Opioid in Forensic Toxicology Casework Using Liquid Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry

Krotulski et al. reported the emergence of new designer opioid, brorphine, in forensic toxicology casework. The substance was metabolized in vivo by n-dealkylation and hydroxylation. When 20 postmortem cases were tested for the substance, blood concentrations ranged 0.1 – 10 ng/mL (mean, 2.5±3.1 ng/mL) and urine concentrations ranged 0.2 – 23 ng/mL (4.6±7.6 ng/mL). In the 20 cases, brorphine was detected alongside other opioids and benzodiazepines – fentanyl was present in all cases and flualprazolam was present in 80% of cases. Other opioids detected were 6-acetylmorphine/morphine (heroin) and tramadol.

Forensic Science International
Volume 321
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2021.110721>

Alpha-Pyrrolidinopentiathiophenone (α -PVT): A Forensic Case Study Including Plasma Concentrations

Paul et al. reported a series of 44 forensic toxicology cases where alpha-pyrrolidinopentiathiophenone (α -PVT) were detected in blood plasma. Blood plasma concentrations ranged 0.9 – 306 ng/mL (mean, 66.6 ng/mL). α -PVT was detected alongside opioids, benzodiazepines, pregabalin, ethanol, and stimulants/pyrovalerones. The authors suggest that the detection of α -PVT occurred in cases of aggressive and combative behavior and psychotic changes, but the substance was

also found in cases with no behavioral changes.

Journal of Analytical Toxicology
Volume 45, Issue 3
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jat/bkaa070>

Flualprazolam Blood Concentrations in 197 Forensic Investigation Cases

Papsun et al. reported the emergence of the designer benzodiazepine flualprazolam in postmortem and human performance toxicology casework and resulting blood concentrations attained from a liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry assay. In 167 postmortem toxicology cases, blood concentrations ranged 2-620 ng/mL (mean, 20±60 ng/mL). In 22 human performance toxicology cases, blood concentrations ranged 4.4-68 ng/mL (mean, 22±18 ng/mL). In the remaining cases, results were positive, but less than 2.0 ng/mL. Flualprazolam was commonly detected alongside opioids.

Forensic Toxicology
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11419-020-00568-1>

Fatal Intoxication with U-47700 in Combination with Other NPS (N-Ethylhexedrone, Adinazolam, 4-CIC, 4-CMC) Confirmed by Identification and Quantification in Autopsy Specimens and Evidences

Nowak et al. reported the case of a 24 year old woman with previous suicidal attempts who was found deceased in bed. Unknown powder and crystal were found at the scene of her death and were later identified as U-47700, N-ethylhexedrone, adinazolam, 4-chloro-N-isopropylcathinone (4-CIC), and 4-chloromethcathinone (4-CMC). Upon a negative autopsy, toxicology was performed. The blood

was positive for sertraline (89.5 ng/mL), U-47700 (1,470 ng/mL), N-ethylhexedrone (58.1 ng/mL), adinazolam (18.0 ng/mL), 4-CIC (8.0 ng/mL), and 4-CMC (1.7 ng/mL). The urine was also positive for each of the substances.

Journal of Analytical Toxicology
Volume 45, Issue 3
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jat/bkaa077>

Two Fatalities Involving Mebroqualone

Woods reported the presence of a methaqualone derivative, mebroqualone, in two postmortem toxicology cases. The first case involved a 36 year old male found deceased after a fire. Carboxyhemoglobin was 19.6% and toxicology revealed lorazepam (30 ng/mL), oxycodone (<20 ng/mL), diphenhydramine (115 ng/mL), and mebroqualone (10,228 ng/mL). Cause of death was certified as cutaneous and inhalational thermal injuries and polysubstance abuse with acute mebroqualone, diphenhydramine, and lorazepam use. The second case involved a 29 year old male who was killed by an oncoming train after he laid down on the railroad tracks. Toxicology revealed amphetamine (65 ng/mL), methamphetamine (535 ng/mL), and mebroqualone (115 ng/mL). Cause of death was certified as multiple blunt force injuries from being struck by a train.



SPECIAL NFLIS ANNOUNCEMENT

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is pleased to announce the partnership between two DEA-sponsored systems, the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) and the Real-Time Communication Synth-Opioids Network (Synth-Opioids), resulting in a permanent NFLIS Synth-Opioids communication platform at <https://synthopioids.nflis.deadiversion.usdoj.gov>.

NFLIS began in September 1997 as a systematic data collection effort to obtain drug chemistry analysis results from local, State, and Federal forensic laboratories (now called NFLIS-Drug). The program now consists of multiple forensic components (NFLIS-Drug, NFLIS-Tox, and NFLIS-MEC) that complement each other to provide a holistic picture of drug trafficking and abuse in the United States. NFLIS offers a valuable resource for monitoring drug abuse and trafficking, including the diversion of legally manufactured pharmaceutical drugs into illicit markets.

Since its inception in August 2017, Synth-Opioids has been bridging multiple disciplines and multiple jurisdictions in forensic sciences for the timely sharing of emerging psychoactive substances in the United States. By sharing scientific data to assist in detecting and identifying unknown synthetic substances and opioids, DEA has been expanding collective scientific expertise and breaking silos of information, not only across the Nation, but also globally.

With this new partnership, NFLIS Synth-Opioids will continue to strengthen and expand the reach of collective scientific knowledge.

DEA is pleased to continue to work with our partners in the forensic communities to address the challenges associated with the rapid evolution of the illicit drug market. Those interested can visit the [NFLIS Synth-Opioids](#) website and request an account. You will be asked to share your forensic discipline, affiliation, and a curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé.

The new communication platform will provide

- rapid dissemination of information;
- DEA emerging psychoactive drug alerts (for public and law enforcement use);
- reports on emerging drug trends and unknown substances;
- searchable and permanent storage of information, organized by category;
- sharing of data and methodologies to address analytical challenges and facilitate prompt detection and identification of emerging psychoactive substances;
- sharing of information on novel forms of drug submissions; and
- opportunities for scientific forensic surveys to gather information quickly.

NFLIS Synth-Opioids Contacts

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MENTORING COMMITTEE

One of the important things the Professional Mentoring Program Committee has discovered over the past two years is that participants can find benefit in being a mentor and/or a mentee at any stage in their career. Students and those just starting out in their career in forensic toxicology may benefit from working with a mentor who has been in the field for just a few years. And even those who have been in the field for many years can still benefit from working with a mentor. We also noticed a trend that some participants in served as mentees in 2020, transitioned to the role of mentor in 2021. We've asked two of those participants a few questions about their experience to give a broader perspective to those in the program, and those who may be interested in participating in the future.



ELISA SHOFF, MS

MIAMI-DADE MEDICAL EXAMINER

What attracted you to our mentoring program?

What attracted me to the mentoring program was the opportunity to build a professional relationship outside of my lab and specialty (postmortem). I love to learn and grow in all aspects of my life, and the thought of learning from someone new was exciting to me. I also viewed the mentoring program as a way to network and develop a connection that might not happen otherwise.

How do you value mentoring?

I think mentoring is extremely valuable, whether it be in a professional, academic, or personal experience. Everyone needs somebody they can trust, confide in, and look up to for guidance and advice. The feeling of having a mentor that believes in you, and what you can achieve, can be invaluable.

Why did you decide to transition over to be a mentor?

My path to get here would not be considered "traditional". Two years before I began my internship at the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner Department, I could not even tell you what a Forensic Toxicologist was. I was actually planning on going to nursing school. Now, I could not imagine myself doing anything else, and part of that has to do with previous mentors I had, assuring me that this was the field I belonged in. Even though I have only been in the field for 8 years, I felt that I was at a point in my career where I was qualified enough to provide the guidance and support that I received 8 years ago when I was in my mentee's position. I am looking forward to this being a rewarding experience for both me, and my mentee.

How was the change from being a mentee to a mentor?

Fortunately for me, I am still a mentee myself, and they are definitely two different roles that I have to play. Elisa the mentor wants to just dump all of her knowledge and skills about interviewing, research, casework, etc. onto her mentee but still listen to what she needs and what will help her the most.

In contrast, Elisa the mentee wants to learn, and ask all the questions about DUID, lab management, supervising, and the work-mom balance. I think for the most part I am able to juggle both roles, and really focus on when it's about me, and when it's about my mentee. It also helps when both your mentor and your mentee are engaging individuals, which drives the conversations in the direction that they need to go. If you are confident enough in your abilities to provide what a mentee needs, the transition should be a smooth one.

Do you have advice for individuals who want to be a mentor?

My advice is to do it. You may have your doubts, but you will never know the value that you can bring to someone's life as a mentor if you don't at least try. You might surprise yourself and end up having more to offer than you think you do. I think being both a mentor and a mentee is a rewarding experience, and like all new experiences, they are what you make of them. If you've already made the decision to be a mentor, it demonstrates the commitment and energy you are willing to put into the partnership, and that in and of itself is a great thing.

MENTORING COMMITTEE



ALEX KROTULSKI, PH.D.

**CENTER FOR FORENSIC SCIENCE
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

What attracted you to our mentoring program?

For me, the attraction came from knowing I would be meeting and conversing with a new person in a different lab and likely in a different toxicology specialty. We all have mentors in our daily lives, whether they be academic advisors, supervisors, or personal relationships. Joining the mentoring programs isn't necessarily about needing a new mentor or needing a reason to have a mentor, but rather the opportunities that a mentorship bond can create (and you never know when those connection will be most vital!). Admittedly, I wasn't overly aware that SOFT was kickstarting a mentor program – it actually more fell upon me at the YFT symposium in San Antonio. At the time, I had no idea if I was a mentor or mentee, but felt more compelled to see who the committee would pair me up with if I was a mentee. It was that thought of great future connections that drove my interest in the mentoring program, and what continues to keep that interest today.

How do you value mentoring?

Mentoring means something different to everyone, and often something different to those are varying stages in life. For some, mentors get you

though your education. For others, mentors help you find a job. And for those early or later on in their career, mentors can provide a whole host of valuable insights and opportunities. Mentorship itself holds a great deal of value, whether people realize it or not. I think the value for me comes from friendship and connections, and eventually becomes a way to give back to a community we continue to prosper from.

Why did you decide to transition over to be a mentor?

I don't think there is ever a "right time" to transition from mentor to mentee – I think we all always fulfill both roles throughout our entire lives. In other words, I think many people have and retain lifelong mentors and mentorship with colleagues and professionals in other fields while also mentoring others in various capacities. I would be lying if I said I didn't internally question if I was qualified to be a mentor and if it was the right time – I think many share those same thoughts – but I quickly convinced myself that there is never a "right time" or that the "right time" had already passed (think of it like a ripening fruit). I think we all possess qualities that make us good mentors for one reason or another, and I felt like I was ready to make the transition to mentor while maintaining my status of mentee (informally). It can be a bit frightening but the transition has been quite painless and extremely rewarding.

How was the change from being a mentee to a mentor?

Mentor and mentee certainly play different roles in the mentorship continuum, at least for most people. The mentor is often the coach or captain steering the ship through uncharted waters, while the mentee is the energy

or fuel supply that also provides the compass and points in the direction to head. I think that is the largest change from mentee to mentor – it becomes less about me and more about the other person. There is a transition from asking for advice and help to providing answers and telling stories or relaying information about past lived experiences. For me, I feel like my role in the mentorship continuum has drastically changed moving from mentee to mentor, but with an open mind and open ears it has been a smooth and easy transition.

Do you have advice for individuals who want to be a mentor?

Simply: you should do it. Some may think that being a mentor is not for everyone, but I would argue that being a mentor is for everyone although it does depend on the timing and circumstances. We all have reasons we can provide mentorship, we might just not be thinking about the ways in which our support can help others. Mentorship is an open and dynamic process – there is not defined "scope of work" and no definite reasons for mentoring. The great thing about the SOFT Mentoring Committee is that they pair up mentors and mentee based on personal interests and prior experiences. You may think you would not be a good mentor or may think you have no insights to mentor on, but I promise you there are mentees out there – young and old – that are in need of your mentorship... you just might not know or realize it yet.

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TOXICOLOGY RESOURCE COMMITTEE:

AMY MILES, B.S.

FUTURE SOFT MEETINGS

2021

GAYLORD OPRYLAND, NASHVILLE, TN
SEPTEMBER 26–OCTOBER 1, 2021
JENNIFER COLBY AND ERIN KARSCHNER

2022

HUNTINGTON CONVENTION CENTER, CLEVELAND, OH
OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 4, 2022
DOUG ROHDE AND MICHELE MERVES CROSBY

2023

GAYLORD ROCKIES, DENVER, CO
OCTOBER 29–NOVEMBER 3, 2023
DAN ANDERSON AND JARRAD WAGNER

2024

UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS, MO
OCT 27–NOV 2
TBD

TOXTALK

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Issue 2: Submission due by Apr. 9

Issue 3: Submission due by Jul. 9

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