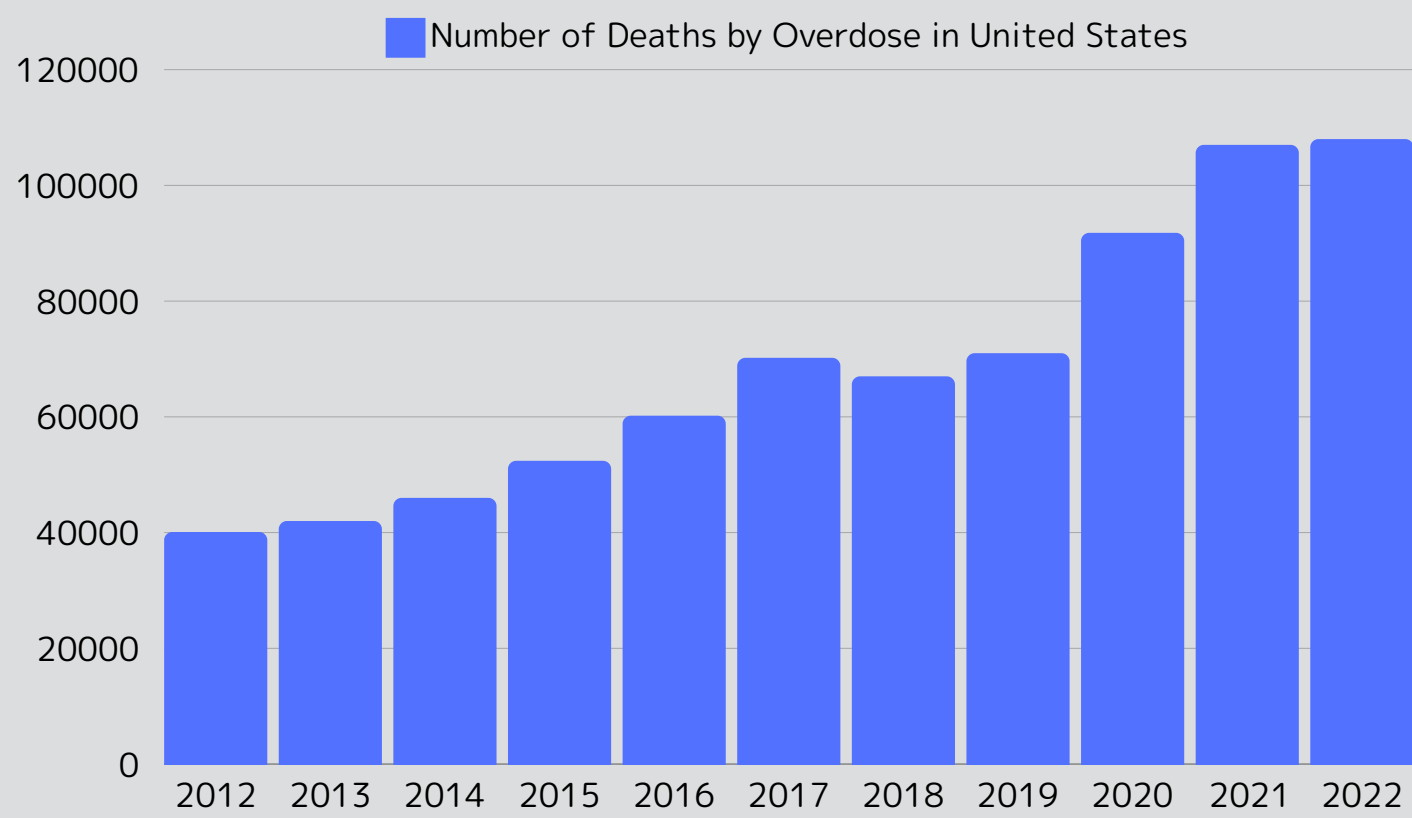


Opioid Epidemic: 2 mg of Death

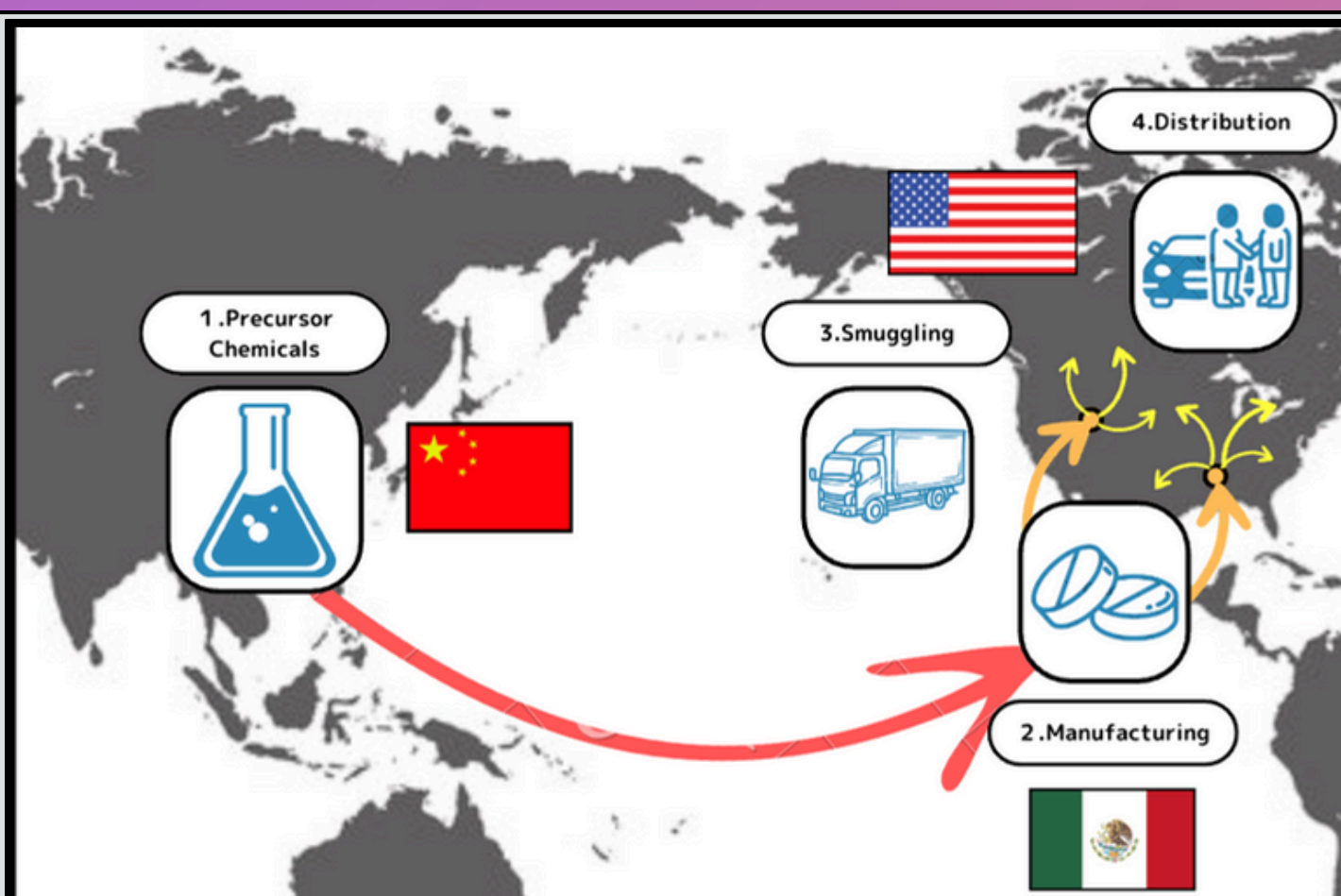
2024 Interns : Tomoya Tsukamoto, Yumi Owada

1. Overdose Defined

“Overdose (OD)” in Japan refers to the act of taking large amounts of over-the-counter medicines such as cold and cough medicines in excess of the prescribed dosage, not for symptom relief, but for sensory or mood changes. However, “Overdose” in the United States refers to drug abuse, especially acute intoxication and death from illegal and prescription drugs. In recent years, abuse of the synthetic opioid fentanyl has skyrocketed in the United States, causing many deaths. The low-cost and accessibility has increased the number of fatalities.



Source : National Institute on Drug Abuse, (2024) U.S. Overdose Deaths by Sex, 1999-2022



Created from Drug Enforcement Administration Fentanyl Supply Chain

2. Black Market Supply Chain of Fentanyl

Precursor Chemicals

The ingredients needed to produce fentanyl are supplied primarily by Chinese chemical manufacturers. These companies export to Mexico using disguised product labels and falsified customs declarations.

Manufacturing

Mexican drug cartels use these precursor chemicals to produce large quantities of fentanyl in illegal labs.

Smuggling

Fentanyl is smuggled across the United States border primarily from Mexico. Smugglers use a technique called “masking” to disguise the product or add new molecules in order to evade border inspections.

Distribution

After crossing the border, Fentanyl is transported to major cities by local criminal organizations and gangs and ultimately sold to consumers through street-level dealers. About ten dollars per day can sustain a fentanyl drug habit.

3. Steps of Opioid Abuse



① Prescribed by hospital for treatment.

② Injuries heal and drug prescriptions are finished.

③ The patients have become addicted to the medicine so they need more.

④ Start using illegal drugs (street level).

⑤ Resulting in drug dependency, rehabilitation or death.



Based on our discussions with Houston Crackdown Director, Mr. Ray Andrews

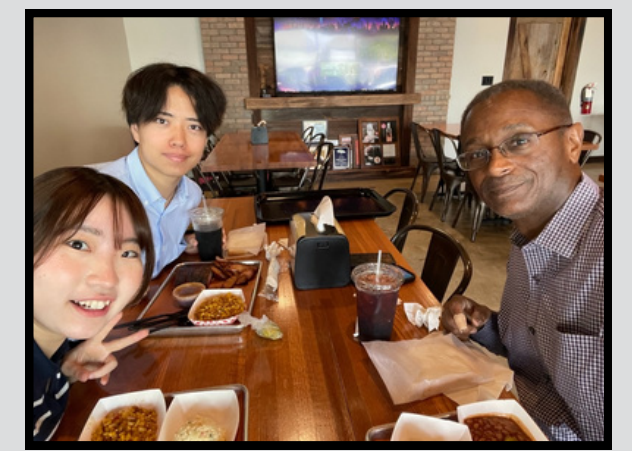
4. WEA 2024 Special Activities

We worked on preparing two major events: the Red Ribbon Rally (RRR) and the Candlelight Vigil. The RRR is a drug awareness event aimed at middle school students. About 600 to 700 students gather at the steps of city hall to listen to a speech about drugs. They also participate in a city council meeting and enjoy music live mixed by a DJ, making it a fun way to learn.

The candlelight vigil is a memorial event for people who sadly passed away due to drug abuse. People gather in a park, light a candle, sing songs to remember the individuals who died. Our jobs are creating contact lists for both events, updating the event flyers for this year, and communicating with the event organizer team via email. While replying to emails may seem like a simple task, it is an important part of building trust.

Additionally, we were able to attend the CDAD (Community of Drug Awareness Day) conference at Rice University on August 16th. There were several panel discussions, and lectures, given by doctors, professors and police. A few weeks later, we also went to Harris County Commission Court. We saw many Houston citizens expressing their opinions about the government. They asked about how the government spends money, and a Korean American group requested language support during disasters.

This 2024 summer's experience was valuable for us. Through interactions with our boss and coworkers at the city hall, as well as with our host families, we had the opportunity to use practical English in real work environment. We also realized the differences between life in America (Houston) and Japan in terms of food, clothing, and housing. Over these two months, we grew both socially and mentally. We truly felt that learning a variety of perspectives is exciting and meaningful.



Eating barbecue with our boss, Mr. Ray.



Making a list for the event.

5. Houston Crackdown



Houston Crackdown coordinates and supports community volunteer projects to reduce alcohol and other drug abuse through prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Since 2011, Every summer, Fukushima students have been working for this department and every year we work for Mr. Ray Andrew, Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security. Mr. Paul Green is the program coordinator.

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WEA体験記

TIPリスト

