

This year on track to have second-highest overdose deaths in Madison County History

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EDWARDSVILLE - In 2015, 91 people died of drug overdoses, making it the worst year for that cause of death in Madison County history.

During a Monday afternoon meeting of the Madison County Public Safety Committee, Madison County Coroner Stephen P. Nonn said 2017 would most likely be the second worst year with 80 deaths already attributed to overdoses. The largest drug involved in these deaths is no longer heroin, but is instead Fentanyl, either by itself or in some sort

of cocktail. Nonn predicts that number to rise to 87 by the end of 2017. Last year, 2016 saw a total of 77 overdose deaths.

"Last year is when we saw the cause turn from heroin to Fentanyl," Nonn said at the meeting.

This year, only 11 people died from heroin alone, which would be a promising number, if 32 overdose deaths were not directly resulting from Fentanyl by itself or mixed with another drug. Fentanyl is an opioid as strong as 50 times more powerful than heroin. Cocktails with Fentanyl include heroin, meth and recently a batch of cocaine, which killed one person, and caused several more to require treatment.

Nonn said the numbers of people admitted to the hospital for overdoses who were saved or revived is unavailable at this time, saying hospitals quit providing those numbers four years ago, due to HIPAA.

While these numbers seeming daunting, and they most certainly are, Nonn said Madison County is simply mirroring the same trend occurring across the nation with the opioid epidemic, saying communities across the United States are seeing similar overdose deaths for their populations. Fentanyl is also on the rise nationally.

Other causes of overdose deaths include other opioid prescriptions, prescriptions not related to opioids and other drugs such as cocaine. There was also one single death attributed solely to alcohol and another attributed to huffing.

Complete overdose death numbers will be available near the beginning of 2018, and will include a complete breakdown of which drugs are wreaking the most havoc among the people of Madison County.

According to the numbers so far this year, and in previous years, Fentanyl is the main culprit.