

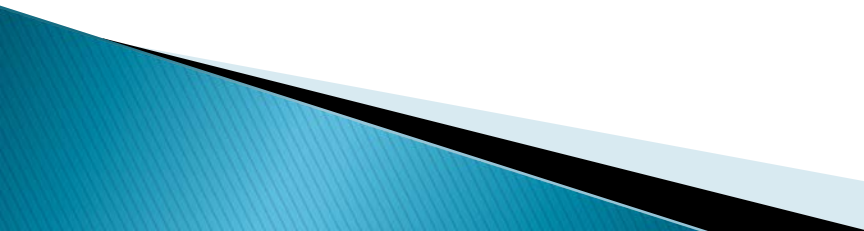
Drugs and Driving: Challenges for Research and Practice

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Drugs and Driving: Where are we?



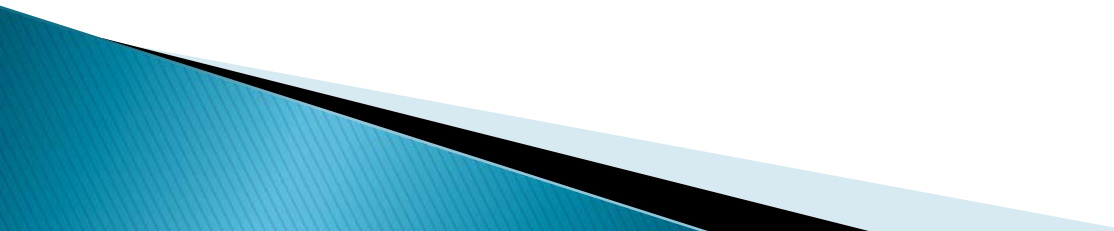
Drugs and Driving: Where are we?

- ▶ Drugged driving will always be more complicated and challenging
 - ▶ Science of drug-impaired driving is much less advanced than for alcohol impaired driving
 - ▶ Impairment is more difficult to measure and track
 - ▶ Illegal and medicinal drugs are numerous and constantly evolving
 - ▶ Combinations of drugs/drugs and alcohol have different effects
 - ▶ Measurement of presence of drugs more difficult, time-consuming and expensive
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But. . . .

- ▶ Concerns about drugged driving are growing.
 - ▶ Laws relating to marijuana are changing rapidly.
 - ▶ Countries (and U.S. states) are responding with traffic safety laws related to drugs.
 - ▶ Traffic safety and enforcement organizations need to take action.
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How can we deal with the changing picture with evidence based approaches?

- ▶ Understanding of the current situation
 - ▶ Ability to monitor changes
 - ▶ Capacity for evaluating effects of policies and programs
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What do we need?

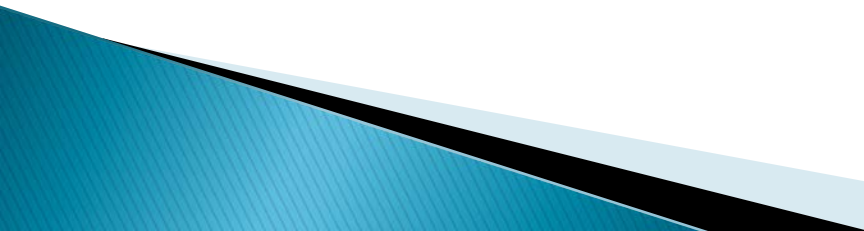
DATA!

Data

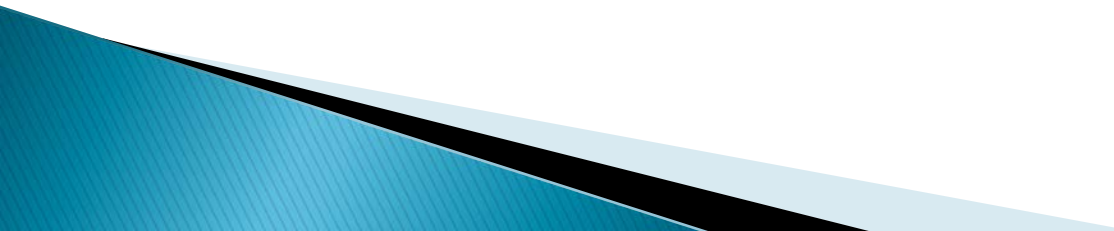
- ▶ Prevalence of key drugs in traffic.
 - ▶ Prevalence of key drugs in crash-involved drivers.
 - ▶ Crash risk estimates for key drugs and combinations.
 - ▶ Impact of policies and procedures on prevalence, arrest rates, individual outcomes, and traffic safety
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What do we have?

U.S. Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS)

- ▶ No consistent policy between, or even within, States for drug testing.
 - ▶ Variation regarding who is tested; which drug is tested for; type of test, cut-off levels, and equipment; and whether blood, urine, or oral fluid is used.
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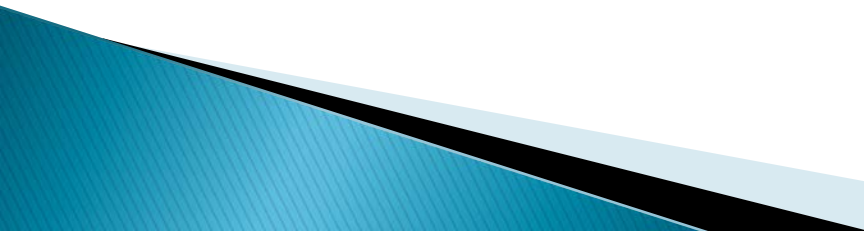
More about FARS

- ▶ Some jurisdictions test only fatally injured drivers; others test all drivers involved in fatal crashes.
 - ▶ Some jurisdictions test no one at all.
 - ▶ A driver is more likely to be tested for drugs if there is information from the crash indicating that drugs may have been a factor.
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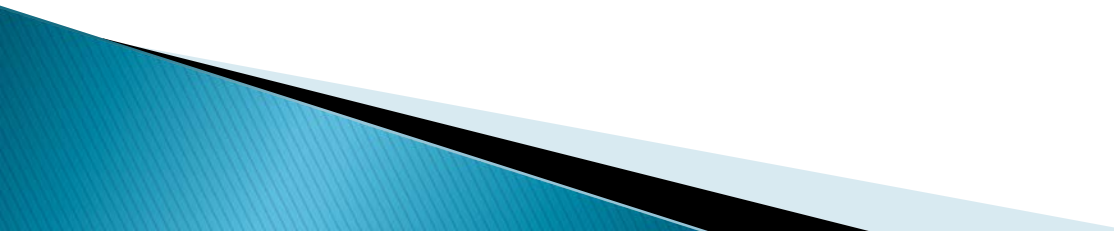
Conclusions about FARS

- ▶ Currently the information in FARS is insufficient to allow comparisons of drug use across years, or across States.
- ▶ It is not possible to make inferences about impairment, crash causation, or comparisons to alcohol from this limited data.

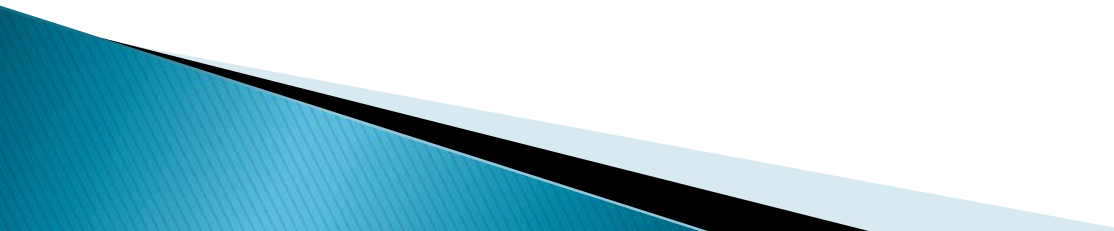
Berning, A., & Smither, D. D. (2014). Understanding the limitations of drug test information, reporting, and testing practices in fatal crashes. (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. DOT HS 812 072). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



Other data needs. . .

- ▶ Arrest rates
 - ▶ Outcomes of adjudication
 - ▶ Outcomes of interventions: penalties and programs
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Current situation

- ▶ Many state laws don't distinguish between alcohol and drug related offenses
 - ▶ Drivers over the alcohol limit often not tested for drugs
 - ▶ Very difficult to monitor trends or the impact of policies and programs
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What can we do?

- ▶ Improve data collection at the state and national level
- ▶ Continue to carry out crash studies, program evaluations, policy monitoring on a smaller scale.

Conclusions

- ▶ Drug use in traffic is changing rapidly.
 - ▶ Drugs are inherently more complicated and difficult to deal with.
 - ▶ Laws, policies and programs will continue to change – with or without an evidence base.
 - ▶ Improved data collection and availability can help jurisdictions establish a better legal framework, better prevention programs, better enforcement, and better programs for offenders.
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