

HRC Alert

What is Your Drug Testing Program Overlooking?

Polly H. Wright, Senior Consultant
March, 2008

“Kicker”, “OC”, “OX”, “Blue”, “Hillbilly Heroin” – does your drug testing program screen for these drugs? With illicit use of prescription drugs on the rise, it may be a good idea to consider some upgrades to your drug testing program.

The most common drug screening programs utilize the 5 panel screen. The 5-panel screen identifies the following drugs:

- ◆ Amphetamines (amphetamines and methamphetamines)
- ◆ Cocaine
- ◆ Marijuana
- ◆ Opiates (morphine and codeine)
- ◆ Phencyclidine (“PCP”)

Employers do have the option of purchasing a 10 panel screen that will identify the drugs listed above PLUS the following:

- ◆ Barbiturates (Amobarbital, Butabarbital, Butalbital, Pentobarbital, Phenobarbital, Secobarbital)
- ◆ Benzodiazepines
- ◆ Methadone
- ◆ Methaqualone
- ◆ Propoxyphene

Employers also have the option of purchasing a 10-panel *extended* screen that will identify the drugs listed above but will also screen for additional drugs such as Oxycontin, Tramadol, etc.

While the cost of conducting the 10-panel extended screen is slightly higher; the potential savings resulting from decreased absences, a reduced accident rate and a lower turnover rate may warrant the higher upfront costs associated with screening.

Another consideration for your drug-testing program is the type of specimen used. Urine is the most frequently required specimen. However, employers should consider the following:

— Continued —

HRC Alert

Page Two: What is Your Drug Testing Program Overlooking?

Another consideration for your drug-testing program is the type of specimen used. Urine is the most frequently required specimen. However, employers should consider the following:

	Urine	Saliva	Hair
Specimen Validity Testing	Yes. Testing for adulteration and substitution routinely done	No. Observed Collection	No. Observed collection. Efficacy of "hair cleansing" agents unknown
Detection of Use Window	24-72 hours	24-36 hours	1-3 months

Employers should consider the use of hair testing for "in-service" testing because it will give a picture of the individual's use over a longer period of time. In addition, employers consider the cost of hair testing to be worthwhile for pre-employment testing because they feel they are able to screen out those users that can clean up their act for a 3 day period prior to undergoing pre-employment testing. Generally, hair testing is double or triple the cost of urine testing; however, employers again need to consider the costs of drug abuse in the workplace.

By the way, "Kicker", "OC", "OX", "Blue", "Oxycotton" and "Hillbilly Heroin" are all street names for the prescription substance Oxycodone most commonly prescribed as Oxycontin.

To learn more about the various drug classes,
please visit: www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/abuse/3-intro.htm

To learn more about various drugs of abuse,
please visit: www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/abuse/chart.htm

Source: George W. Fouse, MD, PhD, Medical Director, HealthForce