

The sharps shooter

May 2023

William Burroughs

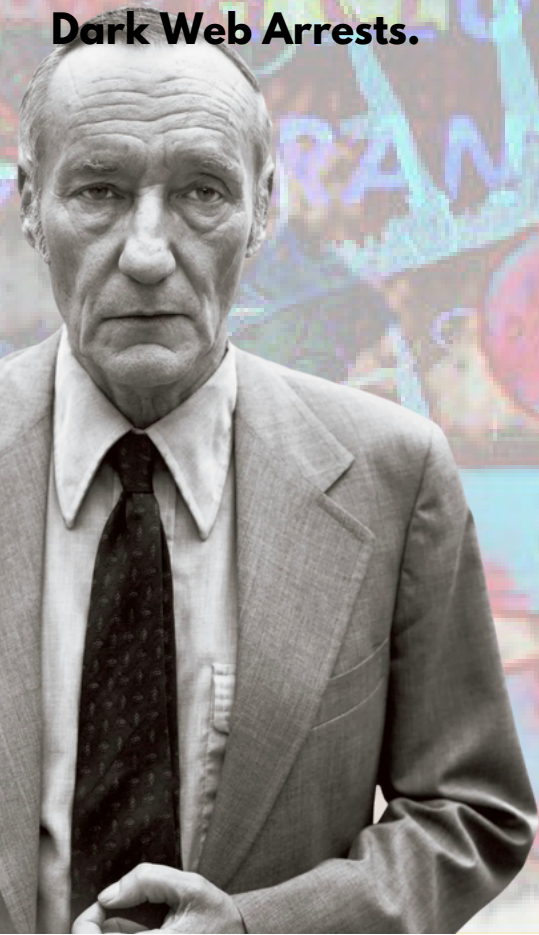
"Probably the third most famous drug addict in literary history".

Injecting Rooms Save Lives

Gaby Bruning, Harm Reductioneer

The Negatives of Prohibition.

Dark Web Arrests.



Welcome to The Sharps Shooter. I hope you're adjusting to the sudden European weather and shortening days. But never mind, the issue is here to brighten your day.

This issue we look at some of the evidence and put to bed the myths around consumption rooms.

We have a piece from Gaby Bruning, who recently received the HR23 National Rolleston Award.

We celebrate William Burroughs, the American author as well known for his drug use as his writings.

We have an article on a danger arising from the failure of prohibition, and news from around the world. I hope you enjoy it.

PARADOX MAGAZINE

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Gaby Bruning, award winning harm reductioneer



The Dark Web, no longer so dark.

Injecting rooms cut crime, overdoses, abscesses

Author: AAP

Drug users who use medically supervised injecting rooms are far less likely than other addicts to commit a crime, inject in public, overdose, share needles or have abscesses, a study shows.

The results were garnered through the first control study of injecting rooms, which compared two groups of drug users who either did or didn't use the facilities in the French cities of Paris and Strasbourg.

The findings supported injecting rooms as public health "no-brainers", Harm Reduction International executive director Naomi Burke-Shyne said.

"The irony of the profound failure of the war on drugs is that it has actually driven the illicit production of more and more substances and has led to more toxic drug supply," Ms Burke-Shyne said.

"In order to save lives, we must offer overdose prevention and supervised spaces for people injecting drugs, together with pill testing, to understand the potency, adulteration or toxicity of a substance.

"(We must also offer) medically supervised injection rooms, the medicine naloxone to reverse overdoses, and drug checking technology work."

The study's results were on Tuesday unveiled at the Melbourne-based Harm Reduction International Conference, as the Victorian government considers whether to approve a second medically supervised injecting room in the city's CBD.

The government in March announced a facility at North Richmond in inner Melbourne would continue to operate indefinitely after a controversial trial that divided locals.

The Andrews government opened the supervised injecting room at North Richmond in June 2018 as part of a two-year trial.

As of March, there were 50 heroin-related deaths in the local council area in the 42 months since the facility opened, down from 68 deaths during the preceding 42 months.

Ms Burke-Shyne said more medically supervised injecting rooms in Australia and abroad were inevitable.

"No one should die of an overdose," she said.

Medically supervised injecting facilities - also called drug consumption rooms - are used officially in 16 countries, including Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Canada and Australia.

Results from another New York-based control study are expected in the first half of this year.

A separate US-based study, also presented at the Melbourne conference, showed people were increasingly using fentanyl and gaining tolerance to the drug, despite having a preference for heroin.

Prohibition Gave Us Xylazine in Fentanyl. The Solution, Drug Warriors Say, Is More Prohibition.

The emergence of the animal tranquilizer xylazine as a fentanyl adulterant, like the emergence of fentanyl as a heroin booster and substitute, has prompted law enforcement officials to agitate for new legal restrictions and criminal penalties. That response is fundamentally misguided, because the threat it aims to address is a familiar consequence of prohibition, which creates a black market in which drug composition is highly variable and unpredictable. Instead of recognizing their complicity in maintaining and magnifying that hazard, drug warriors always think the answer is more of the same.

Unlike a fentanyl overdose, a xylazine overdose cannot be reversed by the opioid antagonist naloxone.

Xylazine was first identified as a fentanyl adulterant in 2006, and today it is especially common in Puerto Rico, Philadelphia, Maryland, and Connecticut.

Xylazine is a sedative, analgesic, and muscle relaxant that is not approved for use in humans but is commonly used by veterinarians.

It is chemically similar to phenothiazines, tricyclic antidepressants, and clonidine. But like fentanyl and other opioids, xylazine depresses respiration, so combining it with narcotics can increase the risk of a fatal reaction.



Unlike a fentanyl overdose, a xylazine overdose cannot be reversed by the opioid antagonist naloxone.

Xylazine also seems to increase the risk of potentially serious skin infections and ulcers that have always been a hazard of unsanitary injection practices. According to a 2022 article in *Dermatology World Insights and Inquiries*, "the presumed mechanism" is "the direct vasoconstricting effect on local blood vessels and resultant decreased skin perfusion," which impairs healing.

Why is xylazine showing up in fentanyl? For the same reasons fentanyl started showing up in heroin. As a 2014 literature review in *Forensic Science International* notes, "illicit drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, are often adulterated with other agents to increase bulk and enhance or mimic the illicit drug's effects." Because xylazine and heroin have "some similar pharmacologic effects," the authors say, "synergistic effects may occur in humans when xylazine is use as an adulterant of heroin."

continued

From the perspective of drug traffickers, fentanyl has several advantages over heroin. It is much more potent, which makes it easier to smuggle, and it can be produced much more cheaply and inconspicuously, since it does not require the cultivation of opium poppies. Xylazine has some of the same advantages: It is an inexpensive synthetic drug that can be produced without crops. And unlike fentanyl, it is not currently classified as a controlled substance, which makes it easier and less legally risky to obtain.

American drug users are not clamoring for xylazine in their fentanyl, any more than they were demanding fentanyl instead of heroin. In both cases, the use of adulterants is driven by the economics of the black market. And as usual with illegal drugs, consumers do not know what they are getting.

The fundamental problem, of course, is the dangerous uncertainty created by prohibition. Unlike alcohol, cannabis products sold by state-licensed pot shops, or legally produced, reliably dosed pharmaceuticals, black-market drugs do not come with any assurance of quality or potency.

We have seen this story play out many times before. Whether it is vitamin E acetate in black-market THC vapes, MDMA mixed with synthetic cathinones or butylone, levamisole in cocaine, or fentanyl pressed into ersatz pain pills, prohibition reliably makes drug use more dangerous.

The solution, according to drug warriors alarmed by xylazine in fentanyl, is more prohibition. "Law enforcement agents are pressing for xylazine to be listed as a controlled substance, which would criminalize distribution for human use.

That crackdown succeeded in the sense that it reduced opioid prescriptions. But it simultaneously deprived patients of the medication they needed to control their pain and pushed nonmedical users toward black-market substitutes that are far more dangerous.

The prohibition-driven rise of illicit fentanyl, meanwhile, made those drugs even more of a crap shoot. The result was predictable: Drug-related deaths not only continued to rise; they rose at an accelerated rate, reaching record levels in recent years.

As federal and state agencies imposed strict controls on prescription opioids, drug dealers and people who use drugs shifted to using illegal opioids—heroin, counterfeit pills and illicit fentanyl.



Maritza Perez is the director of the Office of National Affairs at the Drug Policy Alliance in Washington, D.C., where she leads the organization's federal legislative agenda and strategy to end the drug war.

Maritza Perez Medina, federal affairs director at the Drug Policy Alliance, who is "worried that criminalizing xylazine would not substantially address its problems." Perez Medina notes the perennial challenge confronting drug warriors who reflexively respond to the problems they created by doubling down on a strategy that has failed for more than a century. "Crackdowns put us in a game of whack-a-mole," she says. "When we try to eradicate one drug, a new one comes up." It is a lesson that prohibitionists never seem to learn.



Gaby Bruning, award winning harm reductioneer

For a long time, I felt shame about identifying as Aboriginal. I grew up in the 80's and 90's where racism was rife and normalised through jokes and name calling. I grew up with olive skin but was often asked if my background was Italian. My oldest sister though, who grew up in the 70's, was on the receiving end of many racist slurs because of her dark skin. Growing up with racism being normalised, it took me a long time to feel comfortable to speak up against it and call it for what it is. Racism, ignorance, intolerance.



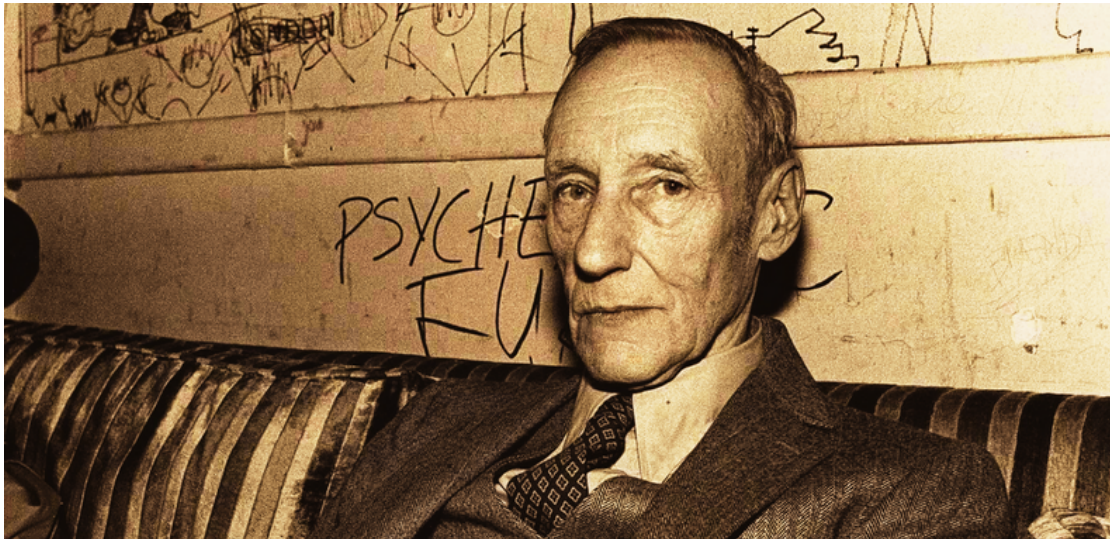
Gaby recently received the HR23 National Rolleston Award, given to an individual, group or organisation that has made an outstanding contribution to harm reduction in the conference host country

I started identifying as Aboriginal when I was 33 years old, and that was only because I started working in an identified role. That was 33 years of carrying my internalised shame when in fact, I should have been celebrating it. I moved through my shame but at the same time, I became so anxious about someone asking who my Mob is. This became another thing to feel shame about when owning my identity. I came to accept that my story is not at all dissimilar to other Aboriginal people due to the impact of the Stolen Generation and colonial systems

Now, at 42 years old, I embrace identifying as Aboriginal. It is not all of who I am, but it is a part of my story. I have found my voice to speak up when practices feel tokenistic, and more often than not they are. We have found ourselves in a time where people are recognising and acknowledging the horrific trauma that colonisation has caused for Aboriginal people.

When I found out I was awarded the National Rolleston Award at the Harm Reduction International conference, I felt really humbled that I was being recognised for all I have contributed to the harm reduction space, but at the same time, it was a reminder that we need more Aboriginal people in this line of work and also the platform to amplify their voices. I am not one to toot my own horn, but I am really proud of where I have come from, the obstacles I have had to navigate, and the work I do today.

‘The priest they called him’: the wild and crazy life of William S Burroughs



By Derek Flynn **THE IRISH TIMES**

After Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas DeQuincy, William Burroughs (who died in 1997) is probably the third most famous drug addict in literary history. However, he was also hailed by Norman Mailer as “the only American writer who may be conceivably possessed by genius”.

Born to a wealthy family in Missouri, Burroughs went to Harvard University. His early life seems to have been a sexually confusing time for Burroughs. Initially, he attended the Los Alamos Ranch School in New Mexico, which was a boarding school for wealthy students where – as he put it – “the spindly sons of the rich could be transformed into manly specimens”. This did not go according to plan, however, as his journals indicate that he was sexually attracted to another boy during his time there. Despite subsequently losing his virginity to a female prostitute in a brothel in St Louis, while at Harvard, he made regular trips to New York City, immersing himself in the gay subculture there.

Luckily for Burroughs, after he graduated, his parents gave him a monthly allowance of \$200. This meant that for the next 25 years, he didn’t have to work and was free to write. It was in New York that he met the other leading lights of the “Beat Generation” as they became known – Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg.

In 1944, Burroughs moved in with Joan Vollmer in an apartment they shared with Kerouac and his first wife. A friend of Burroughs from St Louis, Lucien Carr, killed another man who, Carr claimed, was stalking him and making unwanted sexual advances. He told Burroughs and Kerouac but they didn’t report it. At this time, Burroughs also began using morphine and became addicted. After a search of their apartment, police found letters between Burroughs and Ginsberg about a possible delivery of marijuana. This, combined with his involvement with Carr, meant that Burroughs was in trouble with the police. He and Vollmer – and their newly-born son, William S Burroughs, Jr – fled to Mexico.

While living in Mexico, Burroughs shot and killed Vollmer in a drunken game of “William Tell” (something they referred to as their party piece) that went wrong. Burroughs was arrested and thrown in jail but his brother bribed officials to have him released on bail while he awaited trial for the charge of “culpable homicide”. Burroughs skipped bail and returned to the United States. He was convicted in his absence and was given a suspended sentence of two years in jail. Years later, Burroughs denied the “William Tell” story:

“I had that terrible accident with Joan Vollmer, my wife. I had a revolver that I was planning to sell to a friend. I was checking it over and it went off – killed her. A rumour started that I was trying to shoot a glass of champagne from her head William Tell-style. Absurd and false.”

Burroughs’s killing of Vollmer would be a turning point in his life, one that saw him begin writing in earnest:

“I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan’s death ... the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and manoeuvred me into a lifelong struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out.”



In 1953, Burroughs travelled to Tangier, Morocco. The easy availability of drugs there led him to stay. In the story, The Lemon Kid, Burroughs wrote about his early images of Tangier:

“As a young child Audrey Carsons wanted to be a writer because writers were rich and famous. They lounged around Singapore and Rangoon smoking opium in a yellow pongee silk suit. They sniffed cocaine in Mayfair and they penetrated forbidden swamps with a faithful native boy and lived in the native quarter of Tangier smoking hashish and languidly caressing a pet gazelle.”

The truth was somewhat less romantic. Burroughs became – as he wrote in the book, *Junky* – “a ghost in daylight on a crowded street”. He spent four years in Tangier working on the book that would finally make his name – *Naked Lunch*. The book was produced under the influence of marijuana and opiates. *Naked Lunch* used a style that Burroughs would go on to pioneer known as “cut-up technique”, where he cut up phrases and words to create new sentences as well as cutting different scenes together, even if they were out of context or didn’t make narrative sense. He described *Naked Lunch* as a book that could be cut into at any point. Burroughs later defended his “cut-up technique”:

“People say to me, ‘Oh, this is all very good, but you got it by cutting up.’ I say that has nothing to do with it, how I got it. What is any writing but a cut-up? Somebody has to program the machine; somebody has to do the cutting up. Remember that I first made selections. Out of hundreds of possible sentences that I might have used, I chose one.”

The novel would go on to be an influence on many writers and musicians, including David Bowie (who borrowed Burroughs’s cut-up technique for his lyrics), and science-fiction authors such as William Gibson – not to mention being seen by many as a precursor to postmodernism.

When *Naked Lunch* was eventually published by Olympia Press in 1959, it caused a huge controversy. The United States postmaster general classified it as “obscene” material and ruled that it could not be mailed to subscribers. Eventually, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court found that the book was not obscene. At this point, *Naked Lunch* had established Burroughs’s name.

In 1966, Burroughs went to live in London to try and kick his heroin addiction through a revolutionary new withdrawal treatment being offered there. He wrote: “I awoke from *The Sickness* at the age of forty-five, calm and sane, and in reasonably good health except for a weakened liver and the look of borrowed flesh common to all who survive *The Sickness*.”

Around this time, James Grauerholz, who was a big fan of the writers of the “Beat Generation” and Burroughs in particular, had the idea of sending Burroughs on a reading tour, akin to the rock tours undertaken by bands and singers. These were a huge success and would eventually support Burroughs throughout the next two decades.

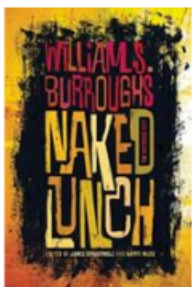


In 1976, Burroughs's son, Billy – now suffering from alcoholism – was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and had to have a liver transplant. Burroughs took care of his son for many months during this period. However, Burroughs Jr. couldn't kick his alcohol addiction and died in 1981 having returned to drinking. At this point, Burroughs was once again addicted to heroin.

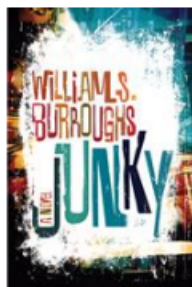
From this time until his death, he went through a number of drug-free periods, only to eventually relapse again. In 1981, he moved to Laurence, Kansas, where he lived for the rest of his life.

Throughout the '80s and '90s, Burroughs had a resurgence in popularity and recorded with a number of bands, including Nick Cave, Tom Waits and Kurt Cobain, as well as starring in a number of movies, such as Gus Van Sant's Drugstore Cowboy. He died of complications from a heart attack in 1997. At the time, he was still on a methadone programme..

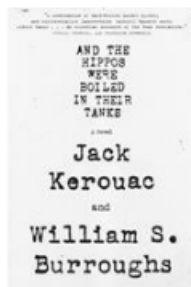
Some of the books by William Burroughs



Naked Lunch



Junky



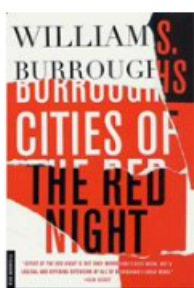
**And the Hippos
Were Boiled in Their
Tanks**



Queer



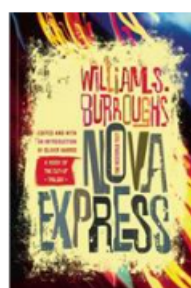
The Soft Machine



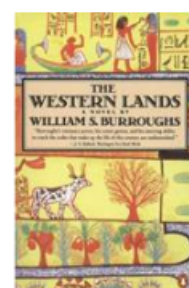
**Cities of the Red
Night**



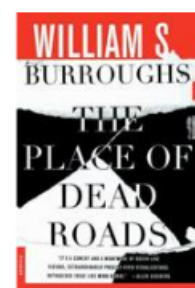
The Wild Boys



Nova Express



The Western Lands



**The Place of Dead
Roads**



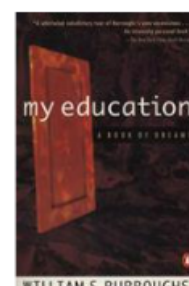
**The Ticket That
Exploded**



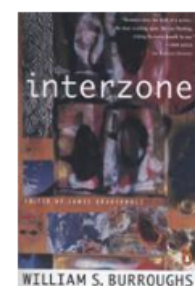
Exterminator!



The Cat Inside



**My Education: A
Book of Dreams**



Interzone

Hundreds arrested as 'Monopoly Market' dark web drug site taken offline

By Mark Saunokonoko

Thousands of people who secretly bought illicit drugs from a notorious dark web marketplace could soon be hunted down and arrested, Europol has warned, after agents seized smuggling site "Monopoly Market".

Almost 300 suspects involved in the site and the trafficking of drugs like amphetamines, opioids and cocaine were today arrested in coordinated worldwide raids.

Police seized more than \$80 million in cash and cryptocurrencies, 850kg of illegal drugs and 117 guns in the operation codenamed SpecTor.

The large haul included 258kg of amphetamines, 43kg of cocaine, 43kg of MDMA and 10kg of LSD and ecstasy pills.

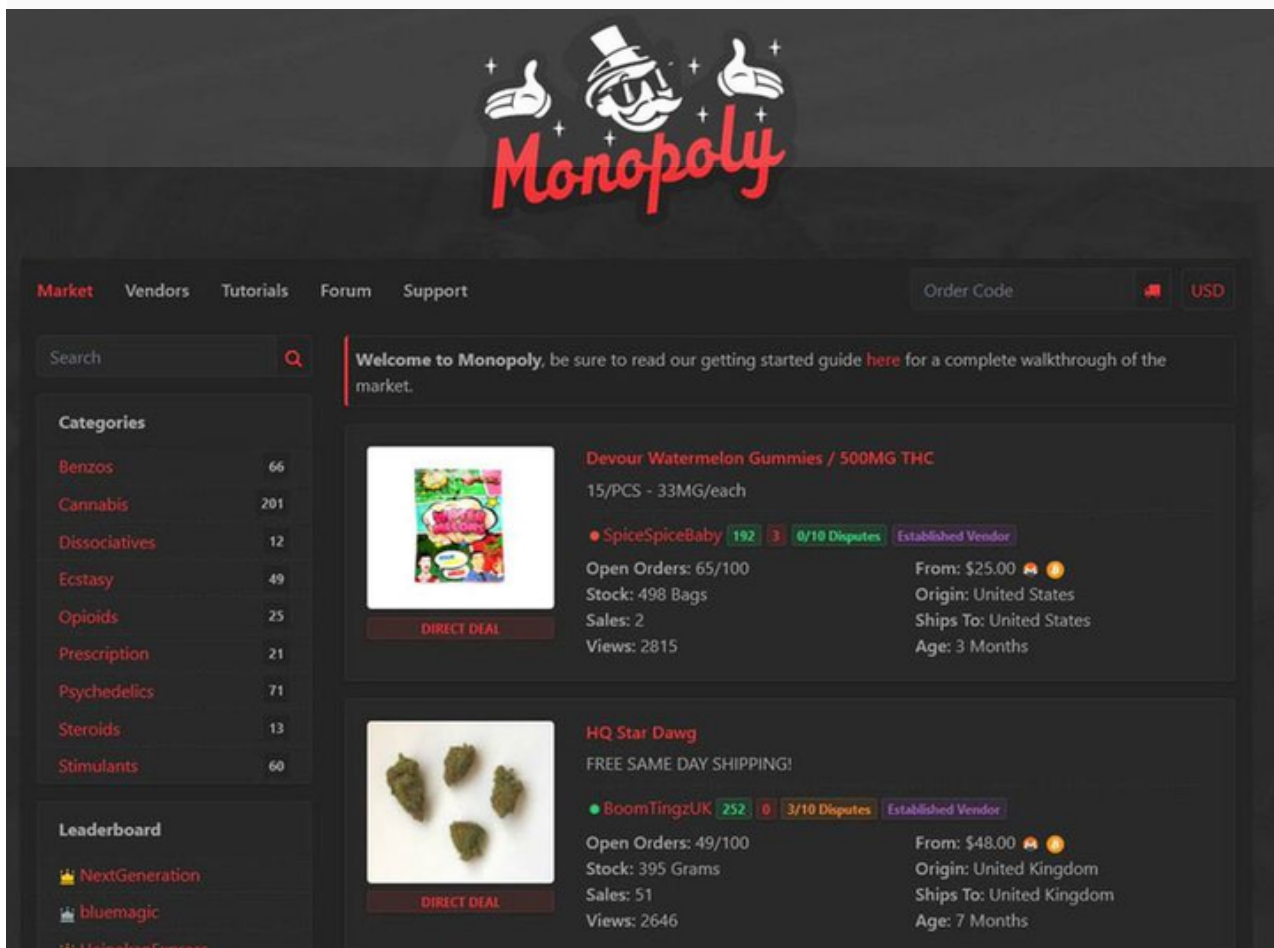
The site, which hijacked the Monopoly Man in dark sunglasses for its logo, had listings for "high quality crack cocaine" and an array of other drug categories, including steroids.

A number of suspects were considered "high-value targets".

As police and specialist teams gained access to the vendors' extensive buyer lists, Europol declared thousands of customers across the globe were now at risk of prosecution, as investigations continued.

In the run-up to the operation, US and German authorities shut down the multi-billion-dollar drug marketplace 'Hydra' in April last year.

Until its takedown, Hydra was the highest-grossing dark web market with massive estimated revenues of \$2 billion.



Drug News

Paramedics' drug and alcohol history exposed in Victorian data breach

The ambulance union has railed against the "sheer incompetence" which saw private drug and alcohol tests of paramedics posted online.

The drug and alcohol tests of graduate paramedics in Victoria were accessible for all staff to view on Ambulance Victoria (AV)'s intranet.

An Ambulance Victoria spokesperson said the data exposed was captured between May 2017 and October 2018.

"Since becoming aware, AV has removed access to these documents and has undertaken an access audit of these documents," the spokesperson said.

"Those affected are being notified and will be provided wellbeing support."
The personal information affects both employees of Ambulance Victoria and prospective employees.

More: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/ambulance-victoria-drug-alcohol-exposure-paramedics-data-breach-melbourne-news/fb2feefe-b425-4bfd-831e-1e294b02a43f>



Deadly opioids detected in counterfeit pharmaceutical pills

Health authorities in Queensland are warning of counterfeit medications in circulation that contain a deadly opioid.

Pills recovered by police have tested positive to protonitazene, an opioid so powerful that even very small doses can be fatal.

Queensland Health's John Allan warned some users may not realise they are taking counterfeit drugs. "Nitazenes, including protonitazene, are a group of synthetic opioids that can be as strong or stronger than fentanyl," he said.

More: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/fake-xanax-pills-opioids-tablets-protonitazene-drugs-queensland-news/a2d75017-d680-483b-83d9-bf0a5020e615>

Major drug bust nets 45kg of meth headed for Melbourne

International authorities have seized 45kg of methamphetamine headed for Melbourne after a global investigation by the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

Australian Federal Police officers in Mexico uncovered plans for the shipment of the dangerous street drug to be sent to an address in Melbourne earlier this month.

The shipment was intercepted in Hong Kong by customs officers who found the drugs hidden inside a thermoforming machine, which molds plastics.

AFP Detective Superintendent Patrick Gordon said criminals were using Hong Kong as a conduit to filter drugs into Australia from Central America. "Hong Kong is a popular transit point for shipments coming from Central America as we have seen in the past, including a record 1.8 tonne liquid meth seizure also destined for Australia," Gordon said.

More: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/major-drug-bust-blocks-45kg-of-meth-headed-for-melbourne/8c41d276-c0b4-4b01-9c3f-5422c14710b5>