

**2018 ACMT Annual Scientific Meeting
FIT Open Mic**

Presenter: James Krueger, MD

Title: Cryptocurrency, the Darkweb, and the Propagation of Illicit Drugs

Abstract: There is an increasing awareness of cryptocurrency in popular culture. Recently, Bitcoin hit an all-time high of nearly \$8000 per coin. It is the most recognized and valued cryptocurrency. Bitcoin is hard to trace and its near-anonymity drives its value amongst those looking to purchase illegal drugs.

The darkweb is a small, subsection of the internet which was initially set up by the U.S government in order to establish secure two-way communication. It is only navigable via TOR anonymizing networks. It is now home to many cryptic drug bazaars which deal in common and novel synthetic drugs. The largest cryptomarket was the Silk Road which was seized by the U.S government but only after operating for over two years.

The currency of the darkweb is Bitcoin due to its difficulty in traceability. One estimate showed that in its two-year existence, the Silk Road recorded nearly 1.25 million transactions and revenue generated was 9.5 million Bitcoin. The vast majority of these transactions were drugs and paraphernalia. Transactions were made all over the world thus starting a global drug market.

The prices of drugs in cryptomarkets are usually higher than street drugs. This is due to the increasing purity and easy, non-descript delivery globally. There is evidence that most of these drugs were bought in bulk which would indicate they were meant for resale on streets worldwide. Physicians should be aware of the increasing availability of novel drugs not usually encountered regionally.

Objective 1: To link several loosely tied concepts: cryptocurrency, the darkweb and illicit drug sales

Objective 2: To explain how this may affect local/ regional drug of abuse trends

Objective 3: To speculate how this may shape exposures to novel drugs of abuse