

Reporting Positive 6-Acetylmorphine (6-AM) Results

This Notice provides guidance for MROs reviewing positive 6-AM results reported by laboratories certified by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the National Laboratory Certification Program (NLCP).

Recent discussion concerning result interpretation and the source of 6-AM in urine specimens has prompted HHS to send this Notice to all affected parties. It continues to be the position of HHS that when a laboratory reports a specimen as positive for the heroin metabolite (6-AM), this is proof of heroin use. There is no legitimate medical explanation for a 6-AM positive result (see [HHS Mandatory Guidelines](#), Section 13.4(d), effective October 1, 2010).

We would also note that in 2010, HHS and RTI International conducted a scientifically valid study of Department of Transportation (DOT) specimens reported as confirmed positive for 6-AM and negative for morphine. The study found “no evidence indicating that the 6-AM originated from a source other than heroin.” [See [Interim Final Rule](#) dated May 2012].

Therefore, MROs will continue to report laboratory-confirmed 6-AM positive results as verified positive drug tests, in accordance with the HHS Mandatory Guidelines and DOT Regulations (See 49 CFR Part 40 at [40.139.a](#)).

References

Department of Health and Human Services, Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs, effective October 1, 2010.

Department of Transportation, Procedures for Transportation Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs, 49 CFR Part 40, effective October 1, 2010

Stout, P.R., C.M. Lewallen, N.D. Bynum, T. Freed, M. Rehder-Silinski, J.D. Roper-Miller, J. Mitchell, S. Crumpton, R. Flegel, and C. Lodico. 2011. *Anomalous Results of Morphine and 6-Acetylmorphine in Urine Specimens*. Poster presented at the Joint Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT)/The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT) Meeting, San Francisco, CA. September.

Department of Transportation (DOT) Procedures for Transportation Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs, 6-acetylmorphine (6-AM) Testing, May 4, 2012.