Understanding the Opioid Crisis: What’s at the Heart of the Matter?

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Drug Poisoning Deaths Rates by County: CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics (L. Rossen, B. Bastian, Y. Chong)
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Other Synthetic Opioids (e.g., Fentanyl, Tramadol)

Commonly Prescribed Opioids (Natural & Semi-Synthetic Opioids, & Methadone)

Heroin

Deaths per 100,000 population

Rise in prescription opioid deaths in United States

1st Wave
Over 183,000 people have died from prescription opioids since 1999

Deaths per 100,000 population

Overdose deaths rose in lockstep with opioid prescribing.
Despite recent declines, opioid prescribing still high and inconsistent

180 MME
1999 | US

VS

640 MME
2015 | US
The amount of opioids prescribed per person varied widely among counties in 2015.
“The amount of opioids prescribed in the U.S. is still too high, with too many opioid prescriptions for too many days at too high a dosage.”

– Anne Schuchat, MD, Deputy Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3 out of 4 people who used heroin in the past year misused opioids first

7 out of 10 people who used heroin in the past year also misused opioids in the past year
Rise in heroin deaths in United States

Over 70,000 people have died from heroin since 2010

Heroin death rate has increased
Rise in synthetic opioid deaths in United States – Likely illicit fentanyl

3rd Wave
Deaths from synthetic opioids excluding methadone increased from approximately 3,100 in 2013 to over 9,500 in 2015

Synthetic opioid death rate (excluding methadone) has increased

Who’s at risk for overdose?

- **Demographics**
  - Men
  - 35-54 year olds
  - Whites
  - American Indians / Alaska Natives

- **Socioeconomics & Geography**
  - Medicaid
  - Rural

- **Risk Factors**
  - Patients receiving opioids from multiple prescribers and/or pharmacies
  - Patients taking high daily doses of opioids
  - Depression, substance use disorder, and prior overdose
The epidemic impacts our families...

- Increase in babies exposed to opioids during pregnancy (born with neonatal abstinence syndrome)
- Increase in children entering foster care
- Greater risk for outbreaks of HIV and Hepatitis C among injection drug users
...And our economy

$78.5 billion
Cost of prescription opioid dependence, abuse, and overdose in the United States in 2013

25%
Percentage of worker’s compensation prescription drug claims that were for opioids in 2011
Knowledge is power!

- **Download** the latest Vital Signs infographic on opioid prescribing
  - [www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioids](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioids)

- **Embed** our Opioid Overdose Prevention microsite into your website
  - [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/microsite](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/microsite)

- **Access** state and county-level data and maps
  - [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data)
  - [www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars)
Let’s continue the conversation

- Email us at InjuryCenter@cdc.gov

- Join the next webinar
  - Successes from CDC-funded prevention programs in states and communities across the country
  - Ways faith-based and community organizations can plug in
The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.