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# The Opioid Crisis: Are We Asking the Right Questions?

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91 AMERICANS

die every day from an **opioid overdose** (that includes prescription opioids and heroin).

# The Opioid Crisis: Are We Asking The Right Questions?



Nearly **HALF**



of all opioid overdose deaths involve a **prescription opioid**.

Candace Robertson-James, DrPH  
Danielle Sands, MPH



Each day, more than

**1,000** PEOPLE

are treated in **emergency departments** for not using prescription opioids as directed.



record number of drug overdose deaths

Fentanyl, overdoses

crisis

Opioid

fentanyl in 90 percent of heroin

more naloxone kits

opioid overdoses

overdose crisis

illicit drug deaths

overdose prevention sites

fentanyl-faced drugs caused nine overdoses in a 20-minute period



Almost **18 out of 100** Americans have used illicit drugs or misused Rx drugs.

# Opioid Use Disorders/ Addiction

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illicit drug heroin as well as the licit prescription pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine, fentanyl and others.<sup>1</sup>

Opioids interact with opioid receptors on nerve cells in the brain and nervous system to produce pleasurable effects and relieve pain.<sup>1</sup>

## Symptoms include<sup>2</sup>:

strong desire for opioids

inability to control or reduce use

continued use despite interference with major obligations or social functioning

use of larger amounts over time

development of tolerance

withdrawal symptoms that occur after stopping or reducing use



# The Opioid Epidemic in the U.S.

In 2015...



12.5 million

People misused prescription opioids<sup>1</sup>



2.1 million

People misused prescription opioids for the first time<sup>1</sup>



33,091

People died from overdosing on opioids<sup>2</sup>



2 million

People had prescription opioid use disorder<sup>1</sup>



15,281

Deaths attributed to overdosing on commonly prescribed opioids<sup>2,3</sup>



828,000

People used heroin<sup>1</sup>



9,580

Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids<sup>2,4</sup>



135,000

People used heroin for the first time<sup>1</sup>



12,989

Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin<sup>2,4</sup>



\$78.5 billion

In economic costs (2013 data)<sup>6</sup>

# Philadelphia Statistics

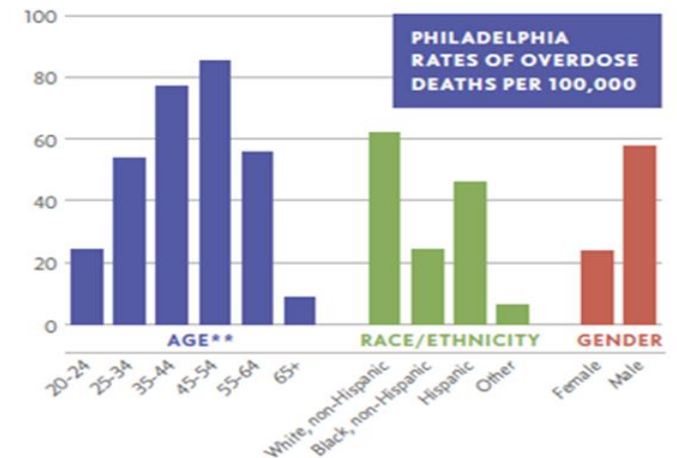
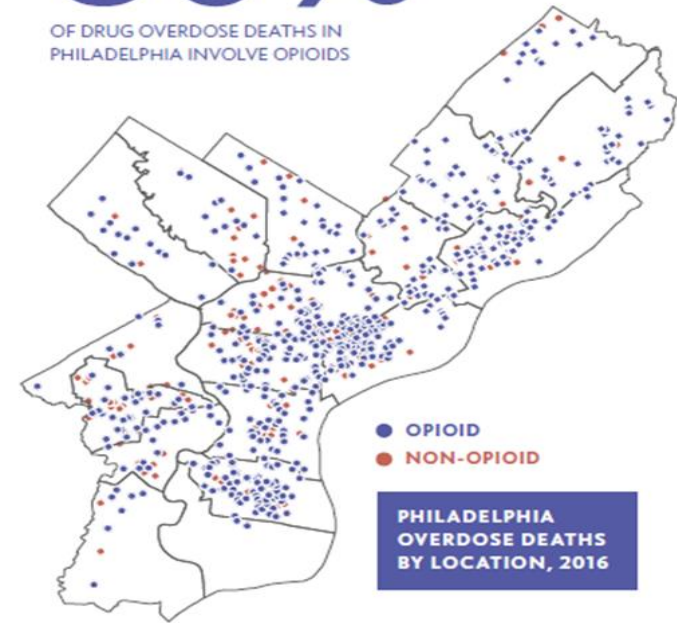
- As of July 2017, Philadelphia ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in overdoses deaths
- For all deaths in Philadelphia, overdoses is the leading cause, specifically due to the use of Fentanyl
- In 2015, Philadelphia's rate of 46.8 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents far outpaced other large cities, such as Chicago (15.4) and New York City (11.2)
- 80% of drug overdose deaths in Philadelphia involve opioids, including prescription opioids, heroin, and fentanyl.

McDaniel, J. (2017). *Pa. overdose deaths again rise, but Philly no longer No. 1*. Philadelphia, PA: The Inquirer.

The Mayor's Task Force to Combat the Opioid Epidemic, 2017

# 80%

OF DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS IN PHILADELPHIA INVOLVE OPIOIDS



\* Rates are calculated using Philadelphia county population denominators from the 2015 American Community Survey five-year estimates. Rates are adjusted to the 2000 U.S. Standard Population age distribution.

\*\* Age-specific death rates are shown. Deaths among persons ages 10-14 and 15-19 years were too few to calculate a rate.

# Heroin use is part of a larger substance abuse problem.

Nearly all people who used heroin also used at least 1 other drug.

Most used at least **3** other drugs.

**Heroin** is a highly addictive opioid drug with a high risk of overdose and **death** for users.

## People who are addicted to...



ALCOHOL

are

**2x**



MARIJUANA

are

**3x**



COCAINE

are

**15x**



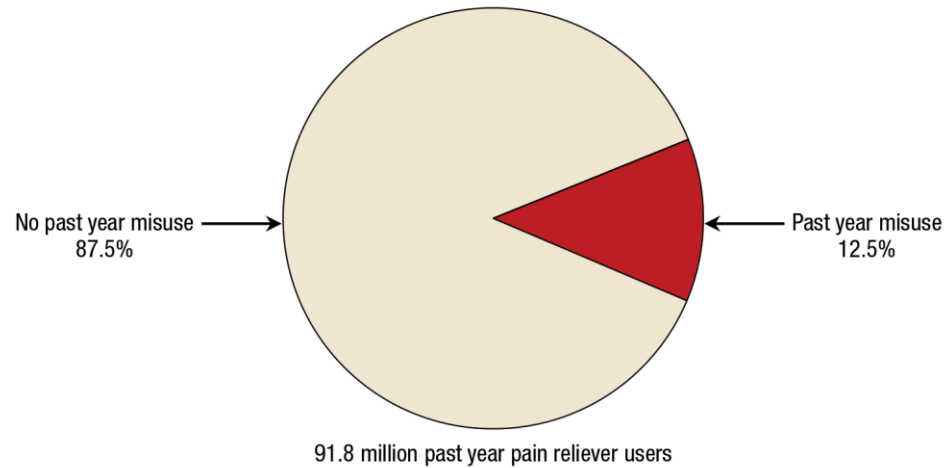
Rx OPIOID PAINKILLERS

are

**40x**

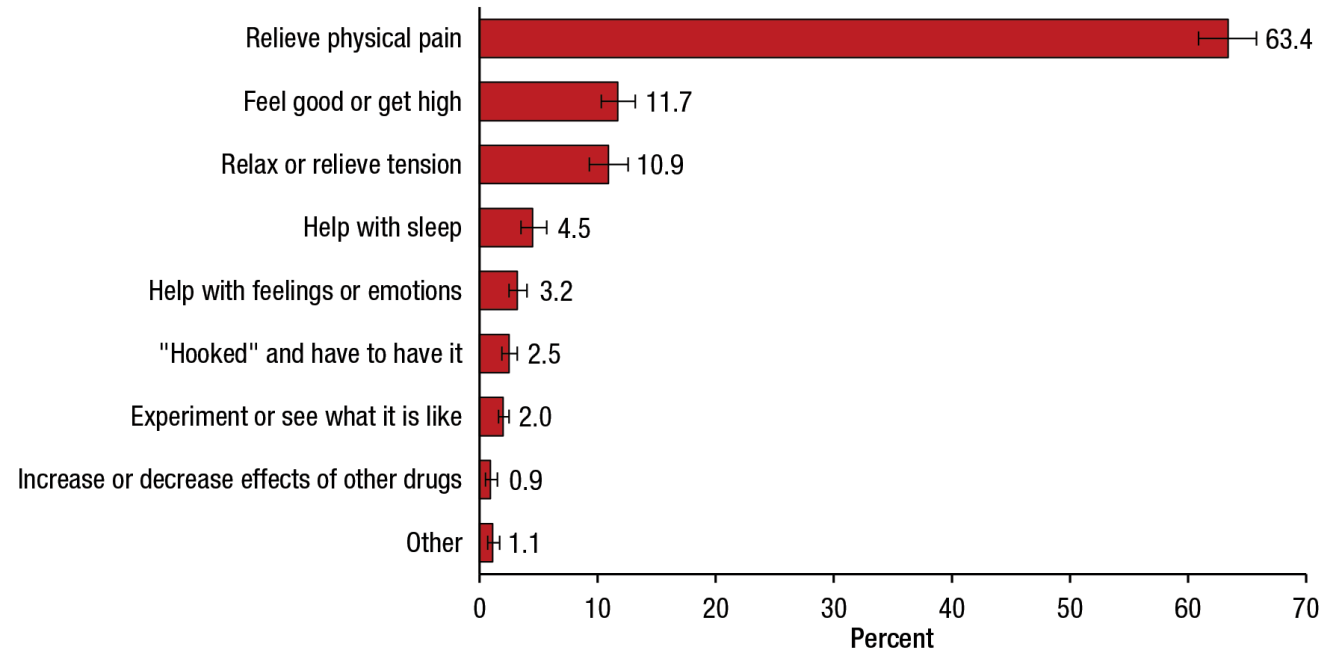
**...more likely to be addicted to heroin.**

# Prescription Pain Reliever Misuse



**Figure 1. Past year misuse of prescription pain relievers among adults aged 18 or older: 2015**

Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2015



**Figure 2. Main reasons for last episode of prescription pain reliever misuse among past year misusers aged 18 or older: 2015**

Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2015.

**8 - 12% develop an opioid use disorder**

(Muhuri et al., 2013; Cicero et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2016)

**An estimated 4 - 6 % who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin**

(Muhuri et al., 2013; Cicero et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2016)

**80% of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids**

(Muhuri et al., 2013)

# U.S. Opioid Prescriptions: Still High Despite Recent Declines

Too many opioid prescriptions for too many days at too high a dose.



## TOO MANY DAYS



Average prescription days supply

**INCREASED  
33%**

from 2006 to 2015

## TOO MANY PRESCRIPTIONS



In 2015, there were enough prescriptions for **every American to be medicated around the clock for three weeks.**

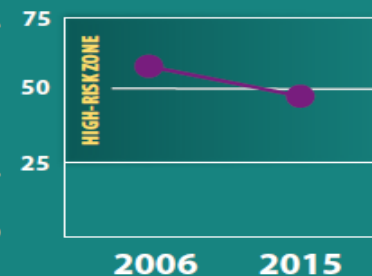
(640 MME per person, which equals 5 mg of hydrocodone every 4 hours)

## NATIONWIDE INCONSISTENCIES

The total amount of opioids prescribed (per person for the year 2015) varied widely from county to county.

## TOO HIGH A DOSE

Average Daily MME Per Prescription



A dose of **50 MME or more** per day doubles the risk of opioid overdose death, compared to 20 MME or less.

Average daily **MME per person** declined nationwide, but is still too high.

**1,319 MME**

Average of highest 25% of US counties in 2015

**203 MME**

Average of lowest 25% of US counties in 2015



# Medication Assisted Treatment & Overdose Prevention

- Methadone, Buprenorphine, Naltrexone
- Naloxone can temporarily reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid
- Naloxone blocks effects of opioids on the brain & restores breathing within two to eight minutes
- Philadelphia, naloxone has been widely used and distributed:
  - administered approximately 4,000 times by the Fire Department & 200 times by Philadelphia police in 2016.

# Cases & Discussion

# Cases



Case 1  
Prescription  
Opioids & the  
Epidemic



Case 2  
Naloxone –  
Who pays for  
it?



Case 3  
ACES &  
substance  
misuse risk



Case 4  
Substance Use  
& Adolescence  
/ Young  
Adulthood



Case 5  
Syringe  
Exchange  
(Prevention  
Point)



Case 6  
Veterans &  
Opioid Misuse  
Risk



# HHS & NIH Priorities

- Improving access to treatment and recovery services
- Promoting use of overdose-reversing drugs
- Strengthening our understanding of the epidemic through better public health surveillance
- Providing support for cutting-edge research on pain and addiction
- Advancing better practices for pain management

National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017

(<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-crisis#six>)

# Recommendations for Philadelphia

- Consumer directed media campaign about opioid risks
- Public education campaign about Naloxone
- Destigmatize opioid use disorder & its treatment
- Improve health care provider education
- Establish insurance policies that support safer opioid prescribing and appropriate treatment
- Increase provision of medication assisted treatment
- Expand treatment access & capacity
- Implement warm handoffs to treatment after overdose
- Expand naloxone availability
- Expand court's capacity for diversion to treatment



# Resources

- [www.AmericanAddictionCenters.org](http://www.AmericanAddictionCenters.org) (national)
- [www.Discoveryplace.info](http://www.Discoveryplace.info) (national)
  - Tips for family and friends
- [www.HealthyMindsPhilly.org](http://www.HealthyMindsPhilly.org) (local)
  - Support and programs for recovery
- [www.PPPonline.org](http://www.PPPonline.org) (local)
  - Medical, shelter, meals, case management
- <http://www.thehealingway.net/>
- <https://www.addiction-treatment.com/find/opiate/philadelphia-pa/>