

Iowa Department of Public Health
Division of Behavioral Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse
Opioid Update: July 2019

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) offers the Opioid Update to share information about opioid use and Iowa's efforts to address the national opioid epidemic. Please feel free to submit topics to Julie Jones at julie.jones@idph.iowa.gov.

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Department News

Total Number of Deaths Related to Opioids in Iowa for 2018 Finalized

According to the IDPH Bureau of Health Statistics, the number of deaths related to opioids has been finalized. In 2018, there were 137 deaths related to opioids – a 33% decrease from 2017 (206). While these numbers have been circulated previously as provisional, the numbers are not considered final until the national vital statistics file is closed. The reason for the delay in completing this report is to allow for as many prior year death events to be registered and included in the final statistical file.

For more information regarding the number of deaths related to opioids in Iowa, please contact Opioid Initiatives Director Kevin Gabbert at kevin.gabbert@idph.iowa.gov.

Implementing the CDC Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids: Dentists

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the CDC Guidelines on Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain. IDPH is hosting a 90-minute webinar intended to assist dentistry professionals in understanding and applying the Guideline, as well as recommended practice for prescribing opioids for acute pain. By participating in this training, individuals will fulfill Iowa licensing board training requirements on this subject.

The training will take place July 30, 2019, at 1:00 PM Central. To register for the training, please click on the following link: [CDC](#)

POMW Trainings:

IDPH has scheduled an "Identifying Opioid Misuse" regional training for July 18, 2019, in Ames.

As part of the Prevention of Opioid Misuse in Women (POMW) project, the purpose of this program is to expand the prevention strategies that support the decrease of opioid misuse in women. Specific objectives of the training include:

- List the individual and community impacts of opioid misuse
- Identify an evidence-based strategy to screen and address substance misuse
- Identify appropriate opioid overdose recognition and response strategies

For more information about the training, please click on the following link: [POMW](#)

Opioid News

Study finds American Dentists Prescribe Opioids at Rates Nearly 40 times Higher than English Dentists

According to a new study, American dentists prescribe opioids at rates nearly 40 times higher than English dentists. The study, published in *JAMA Network Open*, states that dentists are “one of the most frequent U.S. prescribers of opioids despite data suggesting that non-opioid analgesics are similarly effective for oral pain.” The similarities of both countries in oral health and dentistry use allowed researchers to conduct a cross-sectional study examining prescriptions written from outpatient pharmacies and health care settings.

Results from the 2016 study found that American dentists wrote 11.4 million prescriptions for opioids, compared to 28,000 in England. American dentists also prescribed a range of opioids, including long-acting opioids and those with a high potential for abuse that were never prescribed by English dentists. The study concludes by suggesting the United States adopt national guidelines similar to England for the treatment of dental pain with limited use of opioids.

To read the entire article, please click on the following link: [JAMA](#)

Minnesota Targets Care Prescribers Who Prescribe Excessive Painkillers

Minnesota is notifying doctors if they prescribe disproportionate amounts of addictive opioid painkillers compared with their peers, and whether they need to change their practices or risk getting booted out of the state’s Medicaid program. In a new attack against the state’s painkiller epidemic, letters were sent to more than 16,000 doctors, dentists and others who prescribed at least one opioid in 2018 to a patient covered by the government-subsidized Medicaid and MinnesotaCare programs.

Those in the top quarter of prescribing rates will be put on notice this year and will be required next year to participate in state-monitored improvement programs. After that, poor performers could be barred from Medicaid, which covers one-fifth of the state’s patient population. “This is one of the best tools for working with prescribers,” said Tony Lourey, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, which oversees Medicaid and MinnesotaCare.

According to state Department of Health, excessive prescribing has been linked to a sharp increase in Minnesota opioid overdose deaths, which rose from 54 in 2000 to 422 in 2017.

To read the entire article, please click on the following link: [Minnesota](#)

Meth in the Morning, Heroin at Night

Researchers who have tracked drug use for decades believe the new meth crisis got a kick-start from the opioid epidemic. “There is absolutely an association,” said Dr. Phillip Coffin, director of substance use research at the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

Across the country, more and more opioid users say they now use meth as well, up from 19% in 2011 to 34% in 2017, according to a study published last year in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. The greatest increases were in the western United States. That research suggests efforts to get doctors to cut down on writing opioid prescriptions may have driven some users to buy meth on the street instead.

“Methamphetamine served as an opioid substitute, provided a synergistic high, and balanced out the effects of opioids so one could function ‘normally,’” the researchers wrote.

To read the entire article, please click on the following link: [Kaiser](#)

Upcoming Trainings

AATOD Conference: October 19-23, 2019, in Orlando, Florida

The 2019 American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence, Inc. (AATOD) Conference will be held October 19-23, 2019, at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando. The 2019 conference theme, "Out of the Shadows: Managing the Opioid Epidemic through the Continuum of Care" highlights the issues and challenges of medication assisted treatment in the context of the current opioid use/abuse epidemic.

The intent of the conference is to educate and promote acceptance and integration of MAT options by patients, families, clinicians, the medical system, judicial systems, government, policy makers, social service administrations and the public. The conference works to disseminate innovative, evidence-based initiatives and treatment techniques to better serve patients and providers, improve program development and administration, promote integration across the continuum of care, and enhance patient outcomes to assist communities in developing an effective response to this crisis.

For more information on the conference, please click on the following link: [AATOD](#)