

2022 Veterans Mental Health Summit: **Opioid Crisis**

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Objectives

1. Identify recent developments in the opioid epidemic
2. Understand the importance of medication treatment of opioid use disorder
3. Describe the role of opioid overdose reversal medication

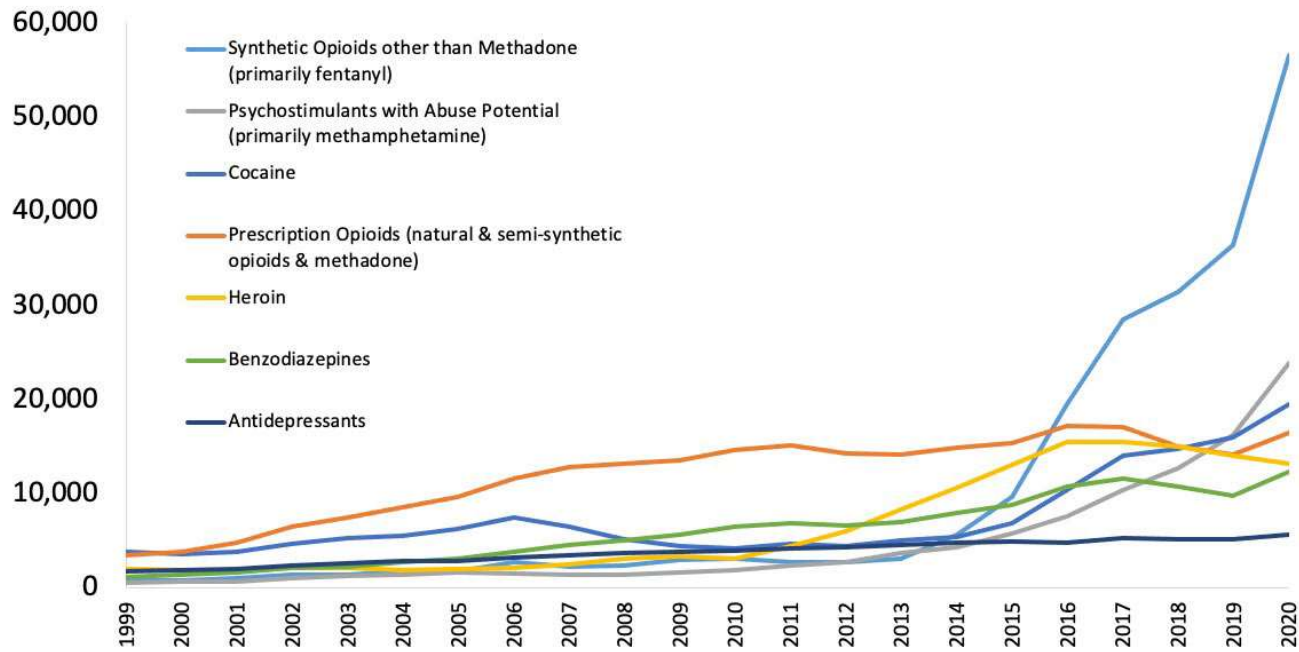
Disclosures

- Paid speaker for Sublocade (Long-Acting Injectable buprenorphine)

Recent Developments in the Opioid Epidemic

- **Decreased access to prescribed opioids**
 - Recognizing need for safer opioid prescribing and updated clinical practice guidelines
 - Crackdown on “pill mills” with prosecution of illegal prescribing of opioids
- **Emergence of fentanyl**
 - A highly potent synthetic opioid, 50-100 times more potent than morphine
 - May be pressed into counterfeit pills (such as other opioids or benzodiazepines) or mixed with other drugs such as heroin, meth, or cocaine
 - Accumulates in fat cells so may persist in the body for an extended period, much like marijuana
 - Drug screens either do not test for fentanyl or have high false positive rate

Figure 2. National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths*, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2020



*Includes deaths with underlying causes of unintentional drug poisoning (X40–X44), suicide drug poisoning (X60–X64), homicide drug poisoning (X85), or drug poisoning of undetermined intent (Y10–Y14), as coded in the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 12/2021.

Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. Top 100,000 Annually

For Immediate Release: November 17, 2021

Contact: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, Office of Communication (301) 458-4800

E-mail: paoquery@cdc.gov

Provisional data from CDC's National Center for Health Statistics indicate that there were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States during 12-month period ending in April 2021, an increase of 28.5% from the 78,056 deaths during the same period the year before.

U.S. Overdose Deaths In 2021 Increased Half as Much as in 2020 – But Are Still Up 15%

For Immediate Release: May 11, 2022

Contact: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, Office of Communication (301) 458-4800

E-mail: paoquery@cdc.gov

Provisional data from CDC's National Center for Health Statistics indicate there were an estimated 107,622 drug overdose deaths in the United States during 2021, an increase of nearly 15% from the 93,655 deaths estimated in 2020. The 2021 increase was half of what it was a year ago, when overdose deaths rose 30% from 2019 to 2020.

Medication Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

FDA approved medications to treat opioid use disorder which are proven to reduce the risk of relapse, overdose, and death:

- **Methadone**
 - Only accessed at specialized treatment clinics
 - Veterans may be referred through Community Care program with a consult usually ordered by a SUDS clinic provider
- **Buprenorphine** (i.e., Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade)
 - Taken under the tongue daily or injected under the skin monthly
- **Long-Acting Injectable Naltrexone** (Vivitrol)
 - Monthly injection that blocks all opioids, preventing relapse after successful complete detoxification off all opioids

MOUD Saves Veterans' Lives

- A retrospective cohort study published in April 2022 in the American Journal of Psychiatry analyzed the charts of over 60,000 veterans who received MOUD from 2003 to 2017 to see if medication reduced risk of suicide mortality (as well as external-cause and all-cause mortality).
- “MOUD is associated with more than a **50% decrease in risk of suicide mortality during stable treatment periods**” (more than 60% if including other causes of death)
- “Buprenorphine was associated with a **reduction of suicide mortality risk of more than 65%**” (more than 70% if including other causes of death)
Watts BV, Gottlieb DJ, Riblet NB, Gui J, Shiner B. Association of Medication Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder With Suicide Mortality. Am J Psychiatry. 2022 Apr;179(4):298-304. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2021.21070700. PMID: 35360916.
- My opinion: similar success rates for heart disease or cancer would likely be considered “amazing breakthroughs” in the popular media

Opioid Overdose Reversal Medication

Naloxone (Narcan):

- Considered the “antidote” to opioid overdose by rapidly reversing the effects of opioids.
- Easily administered by family or other bystanders
- Still requires presentation to emergency department after use since it is shorter acting than many opioids
- Consider it like a fire extinguisher, just in case
- Available without prescription at pharmacies in Florida (may need insurance coverage)
- Available for free by mail:
www.nextdistro.org/florida

Opioid overdose can happen.

**Save a Life.
Carry Narcan (naloxone)**



Naloxone (Narcan) is an emergency medication to treat overdose. It comes as a nose spray or injection.



Even prescribed opioid medications (hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone) can slow or even stop breathing causing an overdose.



VA provides free Naloxone Kits for Veterans, with a prescription.



Show family, friends, neighbors, and caregivers how to use the kit and where it is kept.



Protect yourself.

Ask your provider for your naloxone (Narcan) prescription today!

Safety check: Look for signs of an overdose



Check

- sleepy
- heavy nodding
- deep sleep
- hard to wake
- vomiting



Listen

- slow or shallow breathing (1 breath every 5 seconds)
- snoring
- raspy, gurgling, or choking sounds



Look

- bluish or grayish:
- lips
 - fingernails
 - skin



Touch

- clammy sweaty skin

Responding to an opioid overdose



1

Check for a response



2

Shout for help, call 911, and get naloxone



3

Check for breathing—if not breathing normally, give naloxone and start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)



4

Consider a second dose of naloxone



5

Place in recovery position

Questions???

