The Myths and Realities of the Opioid Epidemic

AMERSA

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Competing Interest Statement

History
- 2002, launched by Purdue Pharma L.P.
- 2006, independent ownership by Denver Health and Hospital Authority
  - Denver Public Hospital for 150 years
  - State sanctioned independent authority

Conflict of Interest Statement
- Many manufacturers of prescription opioids or stimulants as well as federal agencies subscribe to RADARS System.
- RADARS System is the property of Denver Health and Hospital Authority, a political subdivision of the State of Colorado.
- Subscribers receive information, but do not participate in developing the System, data collection, or analysis of the data. They do not have access to the raw data.
- Employees are prohibited from personal financial relationships with any company.
What is the Problem We Need to Solve?

Filling the Balloon

Person in Pain

Susceptible Person

Recreational Abuser

Abuse of Other Drugs

Intact → Chewed → Crushed

Outcomes

Addiction

Overdose

Death
Opioid Addiction is a Random Event

• X% of people receiving an opioid analgesic will develop
  o Abuse
  o Abuse behaviors
  o Addiction
Prescription opioid abuse is at record highs and increasing.

Opioid addiction rates continue to skyrocket.

By Nadia Kounang
Updated 10:35 PM ET, Thu June 29, 2017
Marked **Increases in Prescription Opioid and Heroin Overdose Deaths** in the USA 2000 to 2015

**USA 2015 Overdose Deaths:**
- 52,404 Any Drug
- 33,091 Any Opioid

**Commonly Prescribed Opioids** (natural and semi-synthetic opioids and methadone)

**Heroin**

**Other Synthetic Opioids** (e.g. fentanyl, tramadol)

Prescription Opioid Abuse Decreasing in US

RADARS Opioid Treatment Program
Abuse of IR More Common and ER
Deaths in CDC (NVSS) Decreasing (excl heroin & illicit fentanyl)
Prescription Opioids are the Cause of the Opioid Epidemic
The problem is Apple!
Problems with a Reactionary Agenda

- “OxyContin is the Problem”
- “Drug manufacturers are the problem”
- “Addicts / Drug dealers are the problem”
- The core problem is human frailty and susceptibility to opioids (or perhaps to mind altering substances in general?)
- When we are looking back at the past…
The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic

DREAM LAND

SAM QUINONES
Prescription Opioids are **One** Cause of the Opioid Epidemic
Heroin - Push? Or Pull?

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Polysubstance Abuse
- Opioid Abuser

- Heroin
- Availability
- Cost
- Setting

- Other Drugs

- IR Rx Opioid
- ER Rx Opioid

- Family Dysfunction
- Trauma
- Isolation
- Rape
Medical Cannabis Use Leads To Decrease In Opioid Abuse

The opioid crisis is hitting large cities and small towns indiscriminately and included in this is prescription drugs.

By Alexandra Hicks - August 21, 2017 313 1
U.S.

CAN LEGAL MARIJUANA SOLVE THE OPIOID CRISIS? MEDICAL POT STATES SEE DECREASE IN PAINKILLER ABUSE
Medical Cannabis Laws and Opioid Analgesic Overdose Mortality in the United States

• OBJECTIVE
  State medical cannabis laws related to opioid analgesic overdose mortality?

• DESIGN, SETTING, AND PARTICIPANTS
  Time-series analysis of medical cannabis laws and state-level death certificate data in the United States from 1999 to 2010; all 50 states were included.

Deaths from Opioid Analgesic

National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC)

• Methods
  o Associations between cannabis use at wave 1 (2001–2002) and nonmedical prescription opioid use and prescription opioid use disorder at wave 2 (2004–2005) of NESARC.
  o Cannabis and prescription opioid use by structured interview.
  o Other covariates included age, sex, race/ethnicity, anxiety or mood disorders, family history of drug, alcohol, and behavioral problems, and nonmedical opioid use.

https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2017.17040413
NESARC: Cannabis Use Associated with Increased Opioid Use

• Cannabis use at wave 1 associated with
  o Increased incident nonmedical prescription opioid use (odds ratio=5.78, 95% CI=4.23–7.90)
  o Increased opioid use disorder (odds ratio=7.76, 95% CI=4.95–12.16) at wave 2

• Associations remained significant after adjustment for background characteristics.

• Among adults with pain at wave 1, cannabis use was also associated
  o Increased incident nonmedical opioid use (adjusted odds ratio=2.99, 95% CI=1.63–5.47) at wave 2
Conclusions

• Abuse and death of analgesic opioids are decreasing
  o Heroin and illicit fentanyl deaths are increasing more

• Dramatic changes in heroin distribution has rapidly changing the opioid abuse environment
  o Just call 1-800-Givememyfix

• Cannabis may or may not affect opioid use
  o Studies to date are intriguing, but more robust analytic designs are needed
Questions?

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