

Opioid Mortality Surveillance Report

Analysis of opioid-related deaths in Ontario between July 2017 and June 2018

Background

Why is this important?

- Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of both fatal and non-fatal opioid-related toxicity events across Ontario. Pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical opioids, as well as other non-opioid substances have contributed to these deaths.
- In May 2017, the Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC) together with the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service (OFPS) began using the Opioid Investigative Aid to collect detailed information on the circumstances surrounding opioid-related deaths across the province.

What does this report describe?

- The report summarizes information obtained during investigations of confirmed opioid-related deaths that occurred between July 2017 and June 2018 in Ontario, Canada.

Key Points

The majority of opioid-related deaths in Ontario between July 2017 and June 2018 were accidental. Among these deaths:

- Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues contributed to almost three-quarters of deaths.
- Individuals were commonly males; young and middle-aged adults; unemployed; those living in materially deprived areas; or those living in large population centres.
- Nearly half of deceased persons were alone at the time of the incident. Most incidents occurred in a deceased person's own private residence.
- Resuscitation was attempted in almost half of the deaths, and naloxone was administered in about one-fifth of deaths.

Report Details

How was the report developed?

- Data in this report is from the Opioid Investigative Aid, which is completed by medical coroners and captures information on demographics, health history, and the circumstances surrounding death.
- The manner of death was categorized as accidental, suicide or undetermined.
- The types of substances detected or directly contributing to death were separated into opioids and non-opioids, with the origin characterized as pharmaceutical (i.e., available through prescriptions), non-pharmaceutical or could not be classified.



What were the key findings?

There were 1,337 confirmed opioid-related deaths, the majority were accidental (N=1,209, 90.4%). Among accidental deaths:

- Fentanyl and fentanyl analogues contributed to nearly three-quarters of deaths (71.2%). Non-opioid substances, such as cocaine, methamphetamine, alcohol, and benzodiazepines, also contributed to opioid-related deaths.
- The majority occurred among males (74.3%) and individuals aged 25 to 44 (52.8%).
- The majority (62.0%) occurred among people residing in large urban centres. Nearly one-third (31.8%) lived in neighbourhoods with higher material deprivation (inability to attain basic resources).
- Nearly half (46.8%) occurred among people who were unemployed, whereas 18.1% were employed (32.9% with unknown employment status). Where employment industry information was available, nearly one-third (31.0%) of those employed worked in the construction industry.
- Almost half (48.6%) of deceased persons were alone at the time of incident. Most incidents (59.6%) occurred at the private residence of the deceased person.
- Almost half (47.8%) involved a resuscitation attempt. Approximately one in five (22.2%) had naloxone administered by first responders, hospital staff or bystanders.

Future Directions

Policymakers and Service Providers

- This report highlights important circumstances surrounding opioid-related deaths in Ontario. This information may help inform the tailoring of preventative interventions to better address the unique needs of Ontarians who may be exposed to opioids.

Researchers

- Linkage between the enhanced coroner's data and other data sources available in Ontario can be leveraged to better understand a person's health history, health service use and medication use prior to fatal overdoses.

For more information

Read the Opioid Mortality Surveillance Report
www.odprn.ca/opioidmortality/
www.publichealthontario.ca/opioidmortality



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