Opioid Toxicities and Access to Treatment among Adolescents and Young Adults in Ontario

This study reports trends in opioid-related harms and access to treatment among adolescents (aged 15 to 17 years) and young adults (aged 18 to 24 years). Comparisons are also made with adults (aged 25 to 44 years).

Opioid-Related Toxicities and Treatment Patterns among Adolescents and Young Adults between 2014 and 2021



hospitalizations

5,401

opioid-related emergency department visits



While opioid-related toxicities among adolescents and young adults increased over the study period, rates of treatment **decreased**.











increase in **emergency** department visits 3.9 to 17.7 per 100,000



increase in **rate of** deaths

1.2 to 3.4 per 100,000



decrease in residential treatment admission 29 to 7.9 per 100.000

245 to 112 per 100.000

decrease in rate of **opioid**

agonist therapy (OAT) recipients

Note on OAT: The declines in OAT appear to be unique to young adults (aged 18 to 24), as the rate of individuals receiving OAT remained low and generally stable in adolescents (aged 15 to 17 years) and adults (aged 25 to 44 years).

Opioid Toxicity Deaths among Adolescents and Young Adults

Pre-Pandemic

March 17, 2019 - March 16, 2020

115 deaths

During Pandemic

March 17, 2020 - March 16, 2021

169 deaths

Adolescent and Young Adult Opioid Toxicity Deaths **During the Pandemic**

Demographics

Living Arrangement



>90% of deaths occurred among

young adults (aged 18-24)

After adjusting for population size, the rate of deaths among young adults was

5X higher

than among adolescents (aged 15-17)

7 in 10

deaths occured in **private residences**, with 63% occurring at their home address



Circumstances Surrounding Death

There was an individual present who could intervene in

23% of deaths



Among deaths where an individual was present to intervene,

naloxone



Substances Directly Contributing to Death

Opioids

90% of deaths involved only **non-pharmaceutical** opioids

Significant increase compared to 75% prior to the pandemic

of deaths involved only **pharmaceutical** opioids

Significant decrease compared to 14% prior to the pandemic

Fentanyl and its analogues directly contributed to



of opioid toxicity deaths

Significant increase compared to **84%** prior to the pandemic

Non-Opioid Substances

deaths involved non-pharmaceutical stimulants





benzodiazepines

deaths involved alcohol

Mode of Drug Use



▲ Significant increase compared to **48%** prior to the pandemic

Healthcare Encounters Prior to Death

In the **week** prior to death

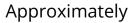


had a **healthcare encounter**



Within the **five years** prior to death





had a diagnosis or treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) 37% with an OUD were prescribed OAT in the year prior to death

Significantly lower than adults aged 25 to 44 (49%)

For More Information

lacono A, Kolla G, Yang J, Leece P, Moumita T, Wu F, Cheng C, Campbell T, Antoniou T, Juurlink D, Sheikh H, Emblem J, Kurdyak P, Bertrand J, Shearer D, Singh S, Gomes T, on behalf of the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario and Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Opioid toxicity and access to treatment among adolescents and young adults in Ontario. Toronto, ON: Ontario Drug Policy Research Network; 2023.







