

Finding Innovative Ways to Battle the Opioid Crisis

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INTRODUCTION

The opioid epidemic has been an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Pennsylvania and the greater United States. According to the Center for Disease Control, in 2019 Pennsylvania alone saw 4,377 drug overdoses (CDC, Page 1, 2021). Nationwide, 2019 saw almost 71,000 nationwide drug overdoses with 70% having an opioid involved (CDC, Page 1, 2022).

SIGNIFICANCE

- Comparing 2010 to 2017, instances of opioid overdose deaths increased by 26,512 (NIH, Page 2, 2022)
- Beginning in May 2020, the following 12-month period saw 81,000 drug overdoses, the most in a 12-month period ever (CDC, Page 1, 2020)
- According to the NIH, those with substance abuse disorders on average have a 40-60% chance of relapsing (NIH, Page 2, 2020)

POSITION STATEMENT

More innovative, new ideas are needed to continue solving the opioid crisis and better the long-term outlooks for patients battling opioid addiction.

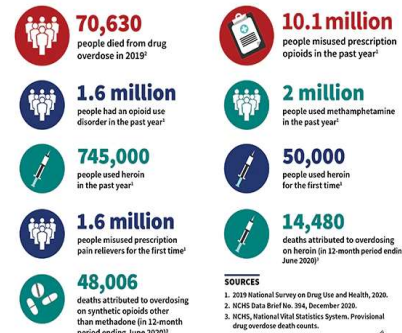
SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- Federal agencies like the FDA continue to research new medications such as Lucemyra that may work more proficiently than standard treatment (FDA, Page 1, 2018)
- Programs such as the NIH's HEAL plan work through primary prevention to address different forms of pain control that do not involve opioids
 - The NIH also looks to pursue early identification tools for signs of developing opioid addiction
- Advancements such as opioids that do not cause respiratory depression, immunotherapies to combat withdrawal, and longer lasting opioid antagonist drugs (NIH, Page 2, 2021)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As evidenced by the information provided by organizations like the CDC and NIH, the opioid epidemic continues to affect people of all different races, age groups, and socioeconomic status. The worsening of the opioid epidemic over the COVID-19 pandemic is blatantly evident. It is incredibly important for the field of nursing to continue battling this healthcare crisis. As more innovative, original treatments and prevention strategies are created, nurses working in a variety of healthcare settings will be the first to help implement these practices.

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS



(NIH, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Strategies to treat patient's pain that does not involve opioids, creating more effective screening tools, and community outreach are all examples of effective tools that can be explored to battle the opioid crisis. Advocating for research by organizations like the CDC and NIH is critical in continuing to find new strategies to battle the opioid epidemic. In doing so, nursing continues to advocate for a large portion of the patient population. If the opioid epidemic is not controlled soon, it will continue to grow and affect thousands of more Americans.

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