Drug Addiction and Overdose in Indian Country: Concerns and Solutions

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Evolution of Drivers of Overdose Deaths, All Ages

Analgesics → Heroin → Fentanyl → Stimulants

70,630 Deaths in 2019
49,860 from Opioids (Prescription and Illicit)

Source: The Multiple Cause of Death data are produced by the Division of Vital Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS).
Per Capita Drug Overdose Deaths by Race

CDC Wonder Online Database (2020) Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999–2019, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. [Ref list]
Age-adjusted Rates Of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Methamphetamine By Race and Ethnicity: US, 2009–2018

Methamphetamine

AI/AN (NH),

White (NH),
U.S.,

Hispanic Black (NH)
Asian or PI (NH)

CDC, NCHS Data Brief No. 384, October 2020

Han B et al., JAMA Psychiatry May 2021 Volume 78, Number 5.
U.S. overdose deaths involving methamphetamine* age-adjusted rates/100k persons

2015

2019

*Psychostimulants With Abuse Potential ICD-10 code (T43.6). This category is dominated by methamphetamine-involved overdose deaths.

Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2019 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2020.
'Opioid overdoses are skyrocketing': as Covid-19 sweeps across US an old epidemic returns

The pandemic is creating the social conditions - no jobs, isolation, despair - that helped enable the opioid crisis to emerge in the first place. Now it's back.

‘There was nothing to help me’: how the pandemic has worsened opioid addiction

US treatment centers have shut down or turned away patients amid as they struggle to adhere to Covid-19 safety protocols.

Covid-19 is undoing a decade of progress on the opioid epidemic

The Opioid Crisis, Already Serious, Has Intensified During Coronavirus Pandemic

Overdose deaths rise as job losses and stress from Covid-19 destabilize people struggling with addiction.
Drugs-involved Overdose Deaths* Continue to Increase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL DRUGS</th>
<th>HEROIN</th>
<th>NAT &amp; SEMI SYNTHETIC</th>
<th>METHADONE</th>
<th>SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS (mainly illicit fentanyl)</th>
<th>COCAINE</th>
<th>OTHER PSYCHOSTIMULANTS (mainly meth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/2020*</td>
<td>74,234</td>
<td>14,172</td>
<td>12,288</td>
<td>2,791</td>
<td>39,361</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>17,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/2020*</td>
<td>88,598</td>
<td>14,495</td>
<td>13,451</td>
<td>3,436</td>
<td>52,561</td>
<td>19,868</td>
<td>22,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2021*</td>
<td>96,801</td>
<td>12,859</td>
<td>13,806</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>60,857</td>
<td>20,231</td>
<td>26,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Change 2/20-2/21</td>
<td><strong>30.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>-9.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>49.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NCHS Provisional drug-involved overdose death counts are PREDICTED VALUES, 12 months ending in select months. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm)
Structural and Social Challenges for SUD During COVID-19

- Stress and Stigma
- Limited medication access and limited peer-support groups/social connection
- Social distancing increases likelihood of opioid overdoses happening with no observers who can administer naloxone
- Job losses
- Housing instability/homelessness
- Incarceration (>50% of U.S prisoners have SUD) and prison populations are at greatest risk SARS-CoV-2 transmission
SUD Services Have Shifted During the Pandemic

• Increased use of telemedicine
• Establishment of mental health hot lines
• Deployment of virtual support meetings
• Expansion of take-home medicines for MOUD
• Buprenorphine prescribing via Telehealth
• Release of non-violent offenders with SUD from jails and prisons (might improve their outcomes)
• Development of web-based educational material that can be used to help in rehabilitation
A Collision of Public Health Crises: The Intersecting Impact of COVID-19 and Opioids/Substance Use for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities, Virtual Meeting, June 24, 2020

- Intersecting crises resulting in devastating consequences across American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.
  - Reported increases in overdose, relapse, drug substitution, mental health problems, suicide-related behaviors, and violence.

- Challenges with data sources and the collection of data needed to assess the magnitude of issues and allocate support.

- Community stakeholders reported a general increase in need for services, prompting many communities to prioritize the development of telehealth as substitutes for in-person care.

- **Despite challenges, AI/AN communities have rallied together, using strength and cohesion to address the intersecting crises (e.g. high vaccination rates).**

Note: Limited data on MOUD to treat fentanyl OUD but both methadone and buprenorphine are reported to be effective
HHS Releases New Buprenorphine Guidelines

The Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder provide an exemption from certain certification requirements under 21 U.S.C. § 823(g)(2)(B)(i)-(ii) of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).

• …… practitioners, defined as physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives, who are licensed under state law, and who possesses a valid DEA registration, may be exempt from the certification requirements related to training, counseling and other ancillary services.

• …… limited to treating no more than 30 patients at any one time.
Treating Methamphetamine Use Disorder and Overdoses

• No FDA approved medications

• Behavioral therapies: contingency management combined with a community reinforcement approach (De Crescenzo et al., 2018).

• No overdoses reversal medications available
Social Factors Influencing Drug Use

James Nachtwey. TIME Special Report

Venniro et al., 2018
The wider set of forces/systems shaping the conditions of daily life
Pathology vs. Strength Based Factors

Depressive Symptoms and Positive Mental Health

Note: Depression rates are rough estimates due to measurement variability across studies.
Mino Giizhigad: Study of mental health and diabetes in upper midwst (Ojibwe), n=214 (see: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5619867/)
Gathering for Health: Expansion of Mino Giizhigad to 5 additional Great Lakes tribal areas, n=194.

You are what you say you are (or measure)
Empirical Evidence of Direct Associations/Effects
Cultural Factors Linked to:

**Youth**
- ↑ Academic Success
- ↓ Suicidal Ideation.
- ↑ Resilience (e.g., lower substance use, more prosocial attitudes)

**Adults**
- ↑ Flourishing Mental Health
- ↓ Apathy, ↑ QoL and ↑ Blood Glucose Control
- ↑ Alcohol Cessation; ↓ Alcohol Abuse

Supported in part by NIDA (DA039912, DA039912, DA13580), NIMH (MH67281, MH085852), and NIDDK (DK091250)

Melissa Walls: Brown et al. 2019
“Family Spirit” Early Childhood Home-Visiting Intervention for Teen Mothers

- **Goal**: improve emotional, behavioral development of children; well-being of their teenage mothers, in at-risk AI communities
  - Developed in partnership with AI communities
- **Process**: trained AI paraprofessionals taught curriculum to at-risk young mothers (pregnancy to 36 months postpartum)
  - At their homes, involving their families
  - Using cultural assets-based format, activities
- **Participants**: mean age, 18.1 years
  - 3% married
  - 32% elevated depression scores
  - Lifetime drug use: 84% alcohol, 79% marijuana, 28% meth
Family Spirit: Outcomes

• In a trial versus mothers receiving upgraded pediatric care alone, participants showed*
  ▪ Parenting: increased knowledge, self-efficacy; reduced stress
  ▪ Mothers: decreased depression, substance use; fewer risky behaviors
  ▪ Children: improved developmental outcomes

• Achieved highest participant retention, outstanding evaluations

• Now a model, active in
  ▪ 87 tribal communities (14 states)
  ▪ 2 new non-Native communities:
    ▪ Chicago, IL
    ▪ St. Louis, MO

*After 36 months
THANK YOU!