



Connecting Data Helps Combat the Opioid Epidemic

Each day, more than 115 Americans die of opioid overdoses. Each year, almost 12 million Americans misuse opioids. How can harnessing the power of surveillance data help reverse the trajectory of this epidemic? Connecting scientists, data, and insights can help.

To keep up with this fast-moving epidemic, CDC scientists from different centers work together to examine the timeliest data available to the agency on emergency department visits for opioid overdoses across multiple states. They integrate information from two unique CDC surveillance programs—the Enhanced State Opioid Overdose Surveillance Program and the National Syndromic Surveillance Program—to get a clearer picture of fatal and nonfatal opioid overdose data, respectively, and a better understanding of the public health impact of this crisis across states.

Some important results from this ongoing analysis were published in the March 2018 *MMWR's Vital Signs: Trends in Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Opioid Overdoses—United States, July 2016–September 2017*. Data from 16 states shows quarterly trends on emergency department visits by state and by rural/urban differences. Overall, emergency department visits for suspected opioid overdoses showed sharp increases and variation across these states, pointing to opportunities for action. Insights gleaned from this report can help guide resource and response decisions locally and nationally.

Connecting data between existing surveillance systems is more efficient than creating new ones. It also avoids duplicate data collection by states and saves money.

