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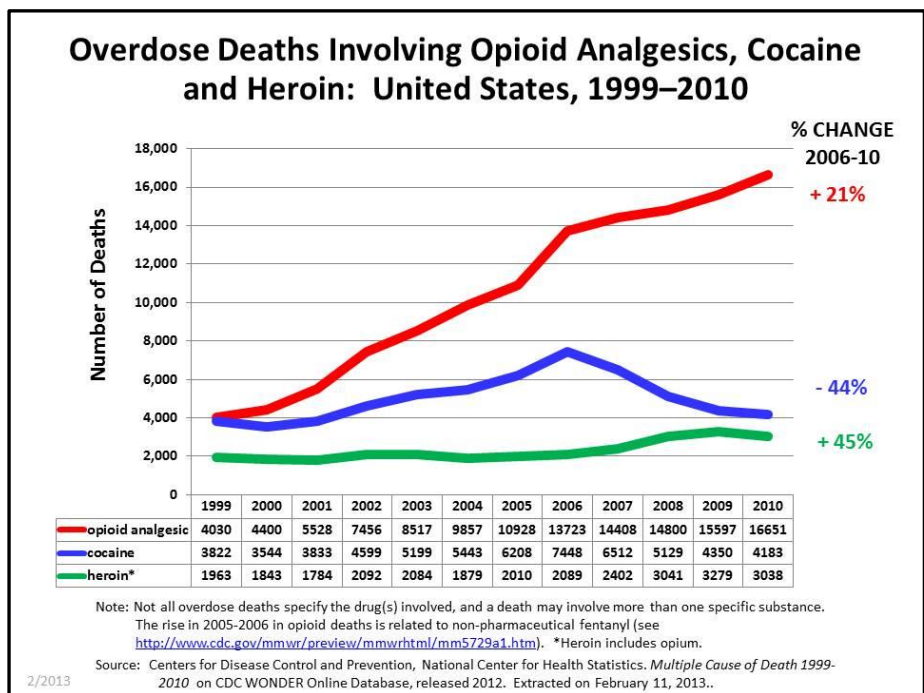
FACT SHEET: OPIOID ABUSE IN THE UNITED STATES

“Heroin use and prescription drug abuse can have deadly consequences...while heroin use is still far less common than prescription drug abuse, we will continue to ensure that agencies across the Federal Government – in close coordination with state and local authorities – continue to respond quickly and effectively to this significant threat.”

– Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy, September 2013

The abuse of opioids, a group of drugs that includes heroin and prescription painkillers, has a devastating impact on public health and safety in this country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 100 Americans died from overdose every day in 2010.¹ Prescription drugs were involved

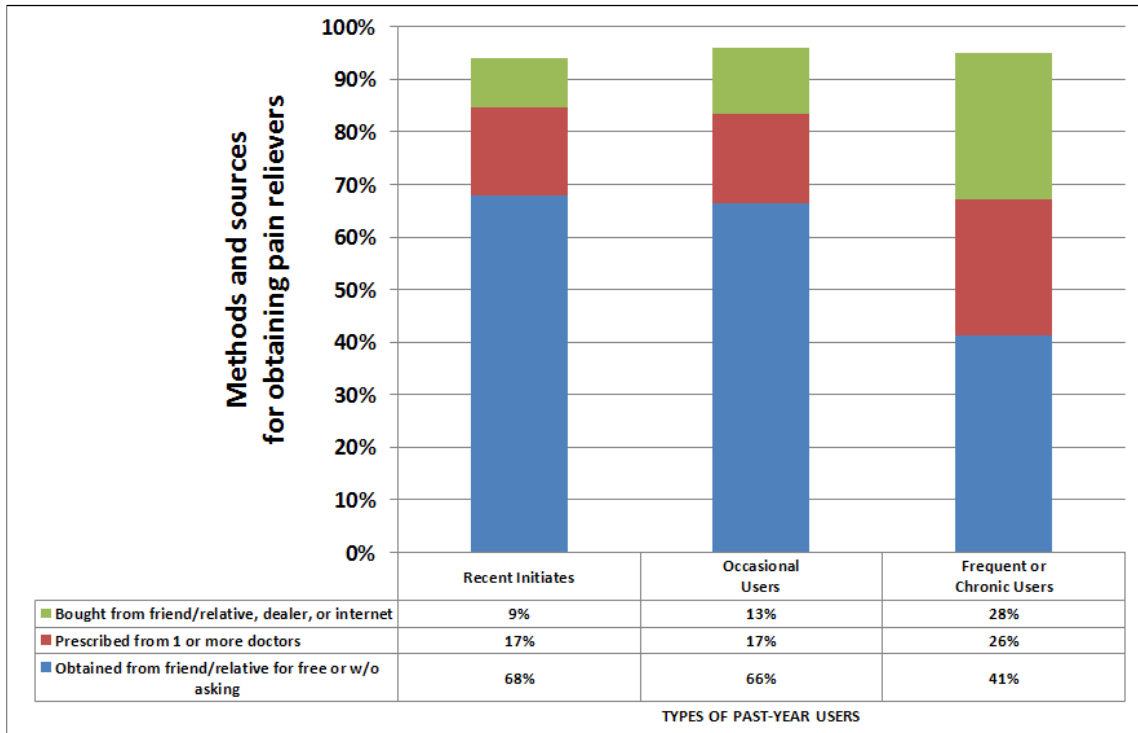
in more than half of the 38,300 overdose deaths that year, and opioid pain relievers were involved in over 16,600 of these deaths (see figure, above).² There were about 3,000 drug poisoning deaths related to heroin. Drug overdose deaths even outnumbered deaths from gunshot wounds or motor vehicle crashes.³



The Disease of Addiction

As history has taught us, we cannot simply arrest our way out of the drug problem. While effective enforcement is essential to protecting our cities and neighborhoods from drug-related crime, reducing drug use requires a broader, multi-dimensional approach. Science clearly demonstrates that addiction is a progressive disease of the brain that can be prevented and treated, and from which people can recover. With this in mind, the Administration has crafted a policy that recognizes we must treat substance use and the disease of addiction as a public health issue, not just a criminal justice issue.

How Different Misusers of Pain Relievers Get Their Drugs



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009-2010

Research shows that many non-medical users obtain prescription medications from family and friends.

The Administration's Response

Since day one, the Obama Administration has deployed a comprehensive and evidence-based strategy to address the threat posed by opioid drugs. The Administration has significantly bolstered support for medication-assisted opioid treatment and overdose prevention, coordinated a government-wide response to the prescription drug abuse epidemic, and pursued action against criminal organizations trafficking in opioid drugs.

Key actions include:

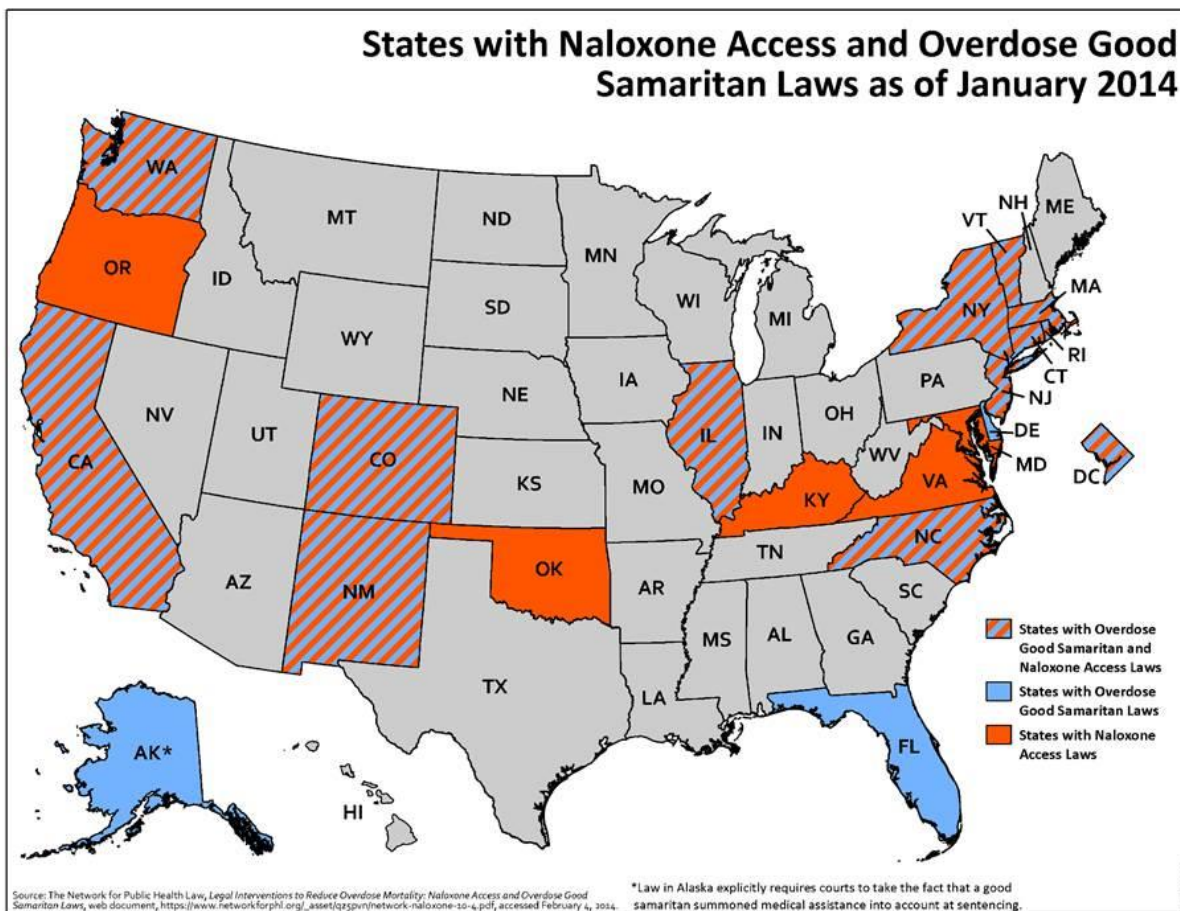
- In 2010, the Administration released its inaugural [National Drug Control Strategy](#), which contains a wide array of actions and sets specific goals for reductions in drug use, including heroin. The *Strategy* noted overdoses from opioids as a “growing national crisis” and directed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to assist health care providers and first responders with training on how to respond to overdose. Also, for the first time, it contained support for the overdose-reversal medication naloxone.
- In 2011, the Administration published a [Prescription Drug Abuse Action Plan, which](#) announced the goal of reducing overdose deaths involving opioids by 15 percent. The Plan supports the expansion of state-based prescription drug monitoring programs, more convenient and environmentally responsible disposal methods for removing

expired or unneeded medications from the home, training for health care providers in proper opioid prescribing and education of patients in consequences of prescription drug misuse, and reducing the prevalence of pill mills and doctor shopping through enforcement efforts.

In June 2012, ONDCP Director Kerlikowske [convened top officials](#) from HHS, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Department of Defense (DOD) to discuss the latest data regarding heroin trends in the United States and the Administration response. ONDCP directed Federal public health and safety officials to increase data sharing, identify trends in substitution between prescription painkiller misuse and heroin use, and coordinate a timely and evidence-based response to any emerging trends in the use of opioids.

- In August 2013, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration released an [Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit, which](#) equips communities and local governments with material to develop policies and practices to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths. The Toolkit addresses issues specific to first responders, treatment providers, and those recovering from opioid addiction.

Spotlight: Reversing Opioid Overdose with Naloxone



The Obama Administration is also encouraging first responders to carry the overdose-reversal drug naloxone. When administered quickly and effectively, naloxone immediately restores breathing to a victim in the throes of an opioid overdose. Because police are often the first on the scene of an overdose, the Administration strongly encourages local law enforcement agencies to train and equip their personnel in the use of this drug. Used in concert with “Good Samaritan” laws, which grant immunity from criminal prosecution to those seeking medical help for someone experiencing an overdose, naloxone can save lives. (See map of states with naloxone access and Good Samaritan laws as of January 2014, above.)

Responding in September 2012 to newly released data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, ONDCP Director Gil Kerlikowske underscored the Administration’s support for naloxone. “We actively support programs that encourage the use of naloxone among first responders,” he said. “We also applaud effective collaboration between law enforcement and public health groups who find common ground in overdose prevention.”

Additional Resources

- The *Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit*, available from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), provides material for developing policies and practices to help prevent opioid-related overdoses:
<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA13-4742>
- SAMHSA’s *Treatment Locator* can help you find a drug treatment facility in your state:
<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>
- The American Society of Anesthesiologists teamed up with ONDCP to develop an Opioid Overdose Resuscitation Card with instructions for helping those suspected of an overdose:
<http://www.asahq.org/WhenSecondsCount/resources>

For more information on Obama Administration efforts to reduce drug use and its consequences while implementing effective drug policy reform, visit www.wh.gov/drugpolicyreform

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Notes

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 2000-2010 on CDC WONDER Online Database. Extracted December 12, 2012.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 2000-2010 on CDC WONDER Online Database. Extracted February 11, 2013.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 2000-2010 on CDC WONDER Online Database. Extracted December 12, 2012.