

# Common Characteristics Of Fatal Prescription Opioid Overdose Decedents

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## Background

- Little is known about the characteristics that may predispose an individual to being at risk for overdose from opioids.

## Purpose

- To identify characteristics related to unintentional (including accidental and undetermined intent) drug overdose deaths in Utah

## Methods

- Collected information on drug overdose decedents by interviewing the relative or friend most knowledgeable about the decedent's life
- Interviews were conducted for persons who died during October 2008–October 2009
- Analysis was restricted to decedents where cause of death included overdose on ≥1 opioid

## Other Findings

- 63% were unemployed during 2 months before death
- 54% had been diagnosed with a mental illness (lifetime)
- 61% had used illicit substances (ever)

## Conclusions

- Medical providers should assess abuse history and mental status and monitor patients with risk factors for opioid abuse and drug-related fatality
- Providers should use screening tools that have been demonstrated to be effective in identifying risks for complications of opioid medications
- Patient education should focus on using medication only as directed

## Opioid-Related Drug Death Cases of Accidental or Undetermined Intent According to Selected Demographic Variables

	Opioid-related drug deaths (N=254)	
	n	%
<b>Body Mass Index (BMI)</b>		
<25 (underweight or ideal)	80	33.1
≥25–<30 (overweight)	68	28.1
≥30–<35 (obese)	94	38.8
<b>Education</b>		
Less than High School	47	18.5
High School or GED	94	37.0
Some College – no degree	91	35.8
College degree or higher	22	8.7
<b>Marital status</b>		
Currently married	87	34.3
Divorced/separated	88	34.7
Never married	72	28.4
Widowed	7	2.8
<b>Religion</b>		
Protestant	8	3.3
Catholic	17	7.1
Latter-day Saint	131	54.4
Other	42	17.4
No religion	43	17.8
<b>Past year religious attendance *</b>		
Weekly	32	17.4
Monthly	22	12.0
Less than monthly	130	70.7
<b>Residence</b>		
Urban	198	78.0
Rural	56	22.0
<b>Suffered from pain</b>		
Yes	224	89.2
No	27	10.8
<b>Suffered chronic (ongoing) pain†</b>		
Yes, pain was chronic	204	93.2
No, pain was not chronic	15	6.9

\*Restricted to decedents who were identified as belonging to a religion.

†Restricted to decedents who were identified as suffering from pain.

## Selected Prescription Opioid Use, Misuse, and Abuse Indicators Among Unintentional, Opioid-Related Drug Death Cases

	Opioid-related drug deaths (N=254)	
	n	%
Took prescription medications for pain during year before death	222	91.7
Obtained pain medications from a health care provider during the last year of life*	204	91.9
Took pain medications more often than prescribed†	82	52.9
Visited >1 doctor to get more prescription pain medication*	62	31.6
Received prescription pain medication from a source other than a health care provider	91	39.6
Used prescription pain medications for reasons other than to treat pain	64	29.8
Complained that provider was not prescribing enough pain medication*	46	21.1
Healthcare provider raised concerns about decedent's use of pain medication*	66	32.5
Others were concerned about decedent's use of pain medication*	166	75.5

\* Results were restricted to decedents who reportedly used prescription medication for pain during the last year of life.

† Results were restricted to decedents who reportedly used prescription medication for pain during the last year of life and received a limited amount of prescription medication from a healthcare provider.

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