Evolution of America's Opioid Crisis

America's opioid crisis did not happen overnight. It is the result of a complex mix of social, cultural, and economic factors that have collectively contributed to one of the most devastating public health issues of our time. Examining it's evolution set against changes in opioid-related overdose deaths is important to our understanding of the issue, and to determining the path forward.

The History

1991

Pain Becomes Vital. California passes <u>legislation</u> mandating health facilities to assess and note a patient's pain "in a manner consistent with other vital signs" of blood pressure, body temperature, pulse, and respiration.

1996

Responding to a "Quick Fix" Culture.

OxyCodone <u>introduced</u> to the American consumer and promoted as a long-lasting pain reliever that was considered non-addictive.

2013

Heroin Deaths Hit Their Peak. Marking the end of an 11-year, 286% increase in heroin-related overdose deaths, the more readily available opioid drug sought after by those unable to illegally access prescription opioids.

Overdose deaths from:

Prescription opioids*: 11,342 Synthetic opioids**: 3,105 Heroin: 8,257

2003

Tracking the Problem. Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Grant provides funding to implement and enhance state-run <u>electronic databases</u> (Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs) tracking dispensing of controlled substances.

2018

Focus on Funding. Government spending on opioid prevention, treatment, and response increases \$3.3 billion over FY 2018.

Fewer Prescriptions Being Written. A 17% <u>decline</u> in opioid prescriptions marks the largest relative single-year drop - 43% - since peaking in 2011.

2016

Pulling Back on Pain. American Medical Association removes designation of pain as the fifth vital sign and begins working in partnership with researchers to help better understand pain and identify alternative pain therapies.

Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. <u>CARA</u> seeks to address the full continuum of care from primary prevention to recovery support, with expanded access to treatment services and overdose reversal medications.

Overdose deaths from

Prescription opioids*: 14,487 Synthetic opioids**: 19,413 Heroin: 15,469

2019

Prioritizing Overdose Prevention. FDA approves the first generic naloxone nasal spray to treat opioid overdose, making it more readily available and expanding the role of pharmacists in direct patient care.

Trending Positive. For the first time in decades, opioid-related overdose deaths in the United States show a slight <u>one-year decline</u>.

Overdose deaths from:

Prescription opioids*: 11,904 Synthetic opioids**: 36,509 Heroin: 14,079

2020

Reversal of Fortune. As the nation's opioid-related death rate was just starting to decline, disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic appear to be contributing to a resurgence in overdose-related deaths.

2020

1995

Focus on Pain is Elevated. American Pain Society creates "pain as the fifth vital sign" campaign, followed by a similar campaign put out by the Veteran's Health Administration.

1999

Increasing Visibility. FDA loosens

broadcast restrictions on Direct to Consumer Pharmaceutical Advertising, now America's most visible form of health communication.

Overdose deaths from:

Prescription opioids*: 2,749 Synthetic opioids**: 730 Heroin: 1,960

2010

Federal Support for Treatment.

The <u>Affordable Care Act</u> requires coverage of, and expanded access to, substance use disorder treatment.

Overdose deaths from:

Prescription opioids*: 10,937 Synthetic opioids**: 3,007 Heroin: 3,036

2017

A New Threat. Rise in <u>overdose deaths</u> due to fentanyl or fentanyl analogs in cities like Washington, DC where 71 percent of drug-related fatalities involved these synthetic opioids, up to 100 times more potent than morphine.

Overdose deaths from:

Prescription opioids*: 14,495 Synthetic opioids**: 28,466 Heroin: 15,482



1990