



Beyond Opioids:

Polydrug Use and the Opioid Epidemic

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Objectives

- Identify trends in polydrug use
- Describe how different drugs impact the brain
- Examine unintentional bias and stigma related to polydrug use



Polydrug Use Defined

“...the concurrent use of multiple drugs, or the combining of drugs. It can occur in a range of patterns and for a variety of reasons, and may or may not involve drug dependence”

Swan, A. & Ritter, A. 2001



The National Picture



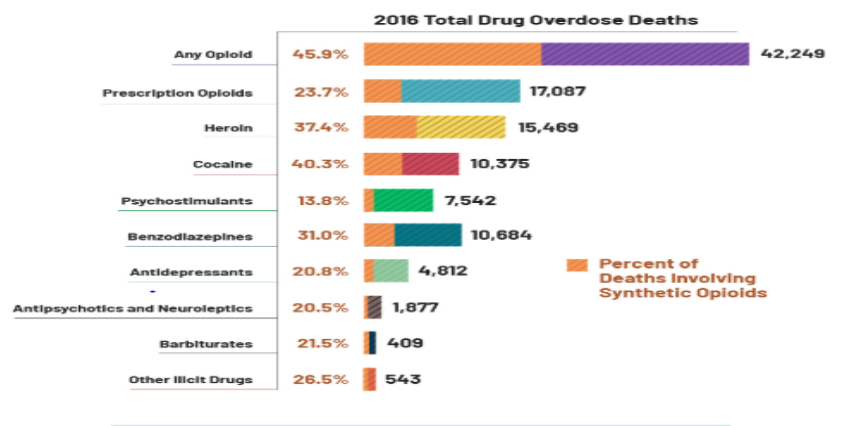
The Data

Among synthetic opioid related overdose deaths in 2016, almost 80 percent involved another drug or alcohol

Changes in Synthetic Opioid Involvement in Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 2010-2016. JAMA. 2018;319(17):1819-1821.



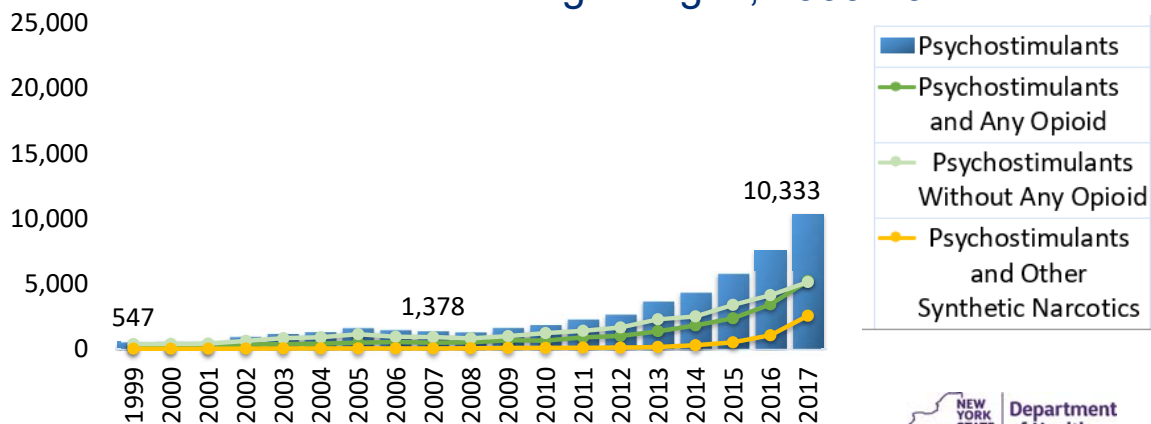
Synthetic Opioids Linked To Overdose Deaths With Other Substances



Jones CM, Einstein EB, Compton WM. Changes in Synthetic Opioid Involvement in Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 2010-2016. JAMA. 2018;319(17):1819-1821.



National Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Psychostimulants (Including Methamphetamine) by Opioid Involvement Number Among All Ages, 1999-2017

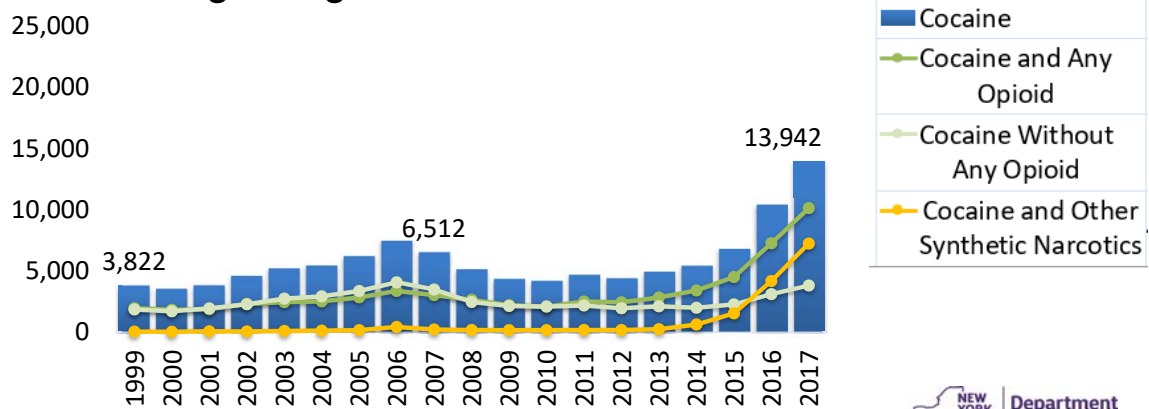


Source: : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2018



National Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Cocaine, by Opioid Involvement

Number Among All Ages, 1999-2017

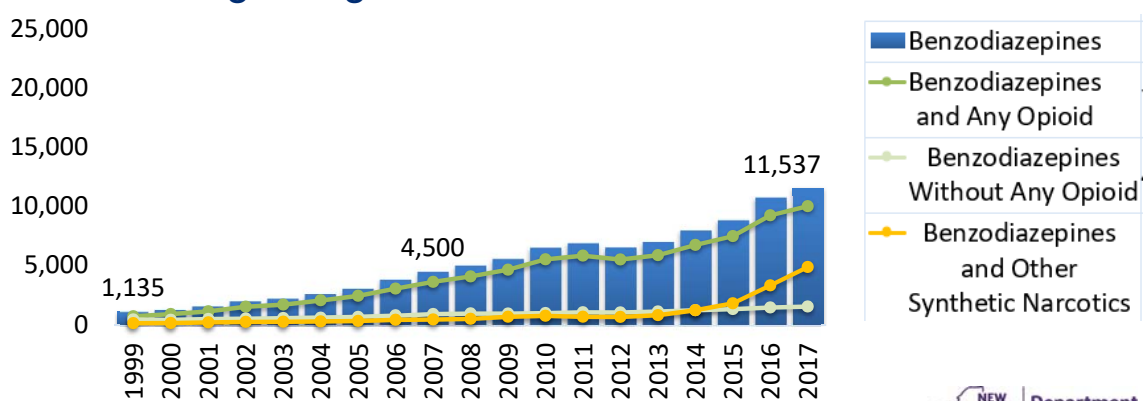


Source: : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2018



National Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Benzodiazepines, by Opioid Involvement

Number Among All Ages, 1999-2017



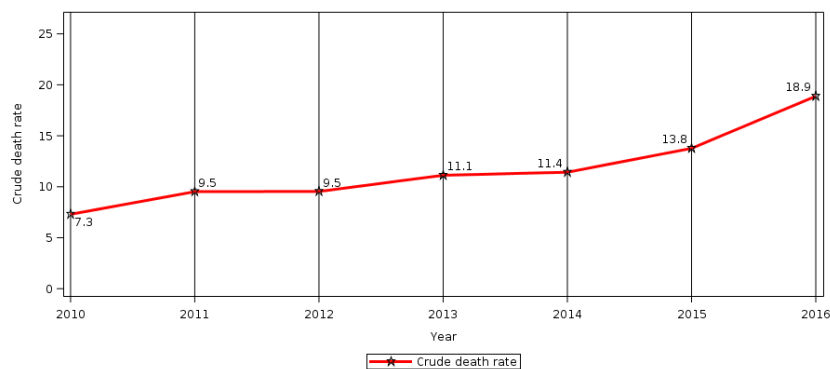
Source: : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2018



The NYS Picture



New York State (NYS) Overdose Deaths Involving Any Drug

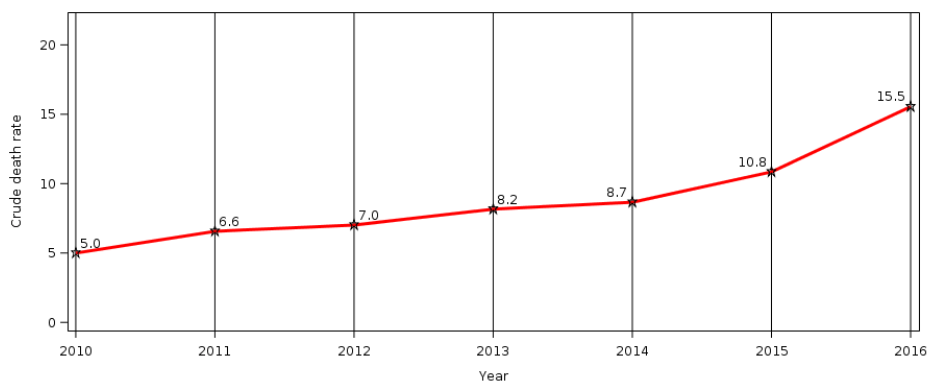


Crude rate per 100,000 population



Data Source: NYS Opioid Dashboard; Data accessed March 2019

New York State Overdose Deaths Involving Any Opioid

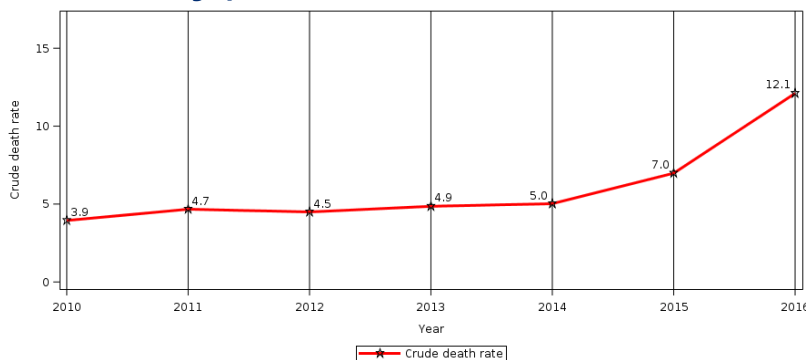


Crude rate per 100,000 population

Data Source: NYS Opioid Dashboard; Data accessed March 2019



New York State Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids (Incl. Illicitly Produced Opioids Such As Fentanyl)



Crude rate per 100,000 population

Data Source: NYS Opioid Dashboard; Data accessed March 2019



Not a New Issue



Cory Monteith
Heroin
Alcohol
Cocaine



Phillip Seymour Hoffman
Heroin
Cocaine
Benzos
Amphetamine



Heath Ledger
Prescription
Opioids
Benzos



River Phoenix
Heroin
Cocaine
Benzos

All images



Commonly Used Substances Activity

- What are the different ways the drug can be administered (route of administration)?
- What are some reasons a person might use this drug?
- Why might a person use this drug with other drugs?



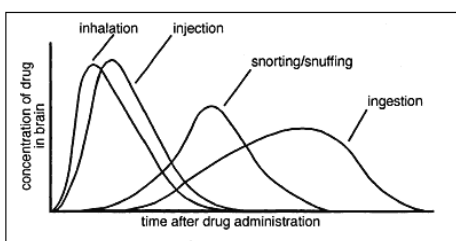
Commonly Used Substances

- Opioids
- Central Nervous System (CNS) depressants
 - Benzodiazepines
 - Barbiturates
- Stimulants
- Others
 - New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)
 - K2/Spice
 - Bath Salts



When Drugs are Introduced

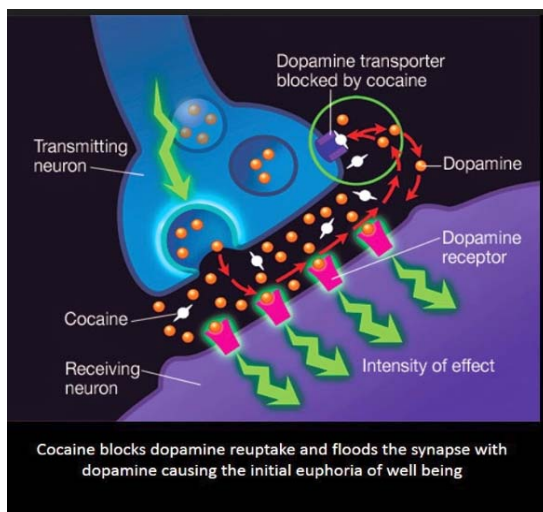
- Once introduced, drugs change how the brain works
- Regardless of the route of administration i.e., a drug is swallowed, sniffed, inhaled, injected, or absorbed etc., drugs will eventually travel through the circulatory system and reach the brain



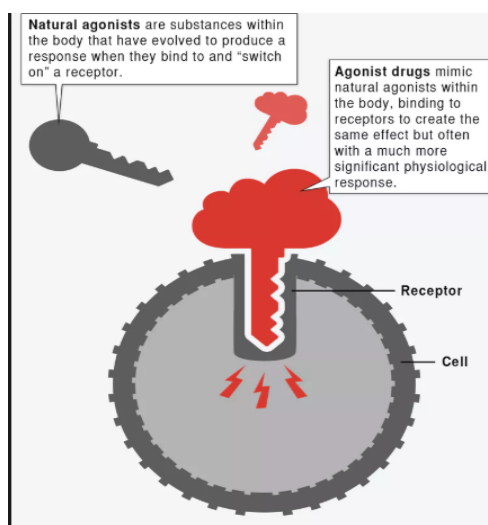
Source: NIDA. (2018, February 15). *Drugs and the Brain*.



Overstimulate The “Reward Circuit”



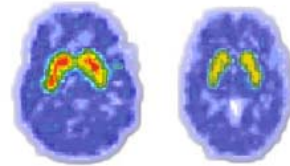
Mimic Brain Chemicals



Brain Changes Over Time

- Dopamine levels increases
- Synapse activity decreases
- Brain connections are rewired
- Change lasts long after use

Control On Meth



Brain scans highlight dopamine receptors, with areas of highest density shown in red

Activity: Drugs and Stigma

- What message is being conveyed by the image?
- Where do these stereotypes come from?
- What purpose does this image serve?
- What is the impact for a person who uses drugs?

Stigma

- The experience of being “deeply discredited” or marked due to one’s “undesired differentness”
- To be stigmatized is to be held in contempt, shunned or rendered socially invisible because of a socially disapproved status

Source: Corrigan, P. W., Watson, A. C., & Miller, F. E. (2006). Blame, shame and contamination: The impact of mental illness and drug dependence stigma on family members. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(2), 239-246.



People
who use
drugs are
more than
their drug
use.



Consequences of Drug Related Stigma

- Hopelessness
- Low self esteem
- Social isolation
- Difficulty securing employment & income
- Physical health & mental health problems
- Decreased quality of care offered
- Reluctance to disclose drug use history or associated medical conditions to providers
- Reluctance to access needed health services



Strategies for Reducing Stigma

- Do away with labels
- Use “person first” language
- Understand drug use falls on a continuum
- Beware of unintentional bias
- Don’t create a dichotomy or assume there is only one “right” way
- Reflect on your own experience



Key Points

- Use of multiple drugs is common among patients presenting for treatment of opioid dependence
- Polydrug use also means that an opioid overdose often includes the use of more than one drug at once
- Fentanyl contamination of other drugs is increasing overdose risk



Thank You

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