

Prescription Pain Medication Deaths in Utah, 2012

Introduction

In 2012, an average of 21 Utah adults died as a result of prescription pain medications each month (12.7 per 100,000 adults). The prescription pain medication death rate decreased significantly from 2007, when the Prescription Pain Medication Program (PPMP) was established, to 2012 (17.6 and 12.7 per 100,000 adults) (**Table 1**).^{1,2}

Table 1: Count and rate of poisoning deaths in Utah, 2006-2012

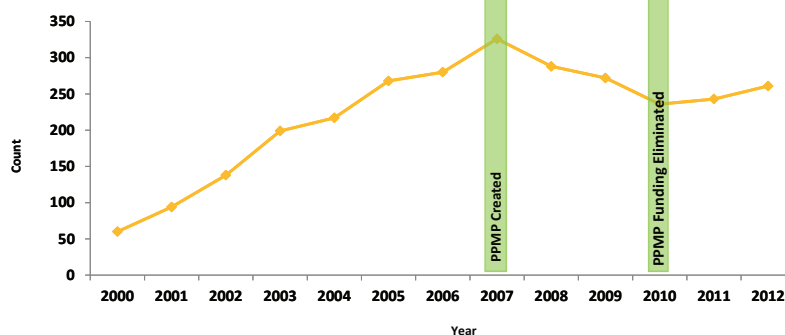
Year	Occurrent* Poisoning Deaths	Occurrent* Rx Drug Deaths	Occurrent* Rx Pain Medication Deaths	Rx Pain Medication Deaths, UT Residents 18+	Rx Pain Medication Death Rate per 100,000 UT Residents 18+	95% Confidence Interval
2006	416	308	280	274	15.8	(14.0 - 17.8)
2007	478	371	326	313	17.6	(15.7 - 19.6)
2008	430	321	288	278	15.2	(13.5 - 17.1)
2009	420	306	272	269	14.4	(12.7 - 16.2)
2010	369	278	236	227	11.9	(10.4 - 13.6)
2011	444	306	243	233	12.0	(10.5 - 13.7)
2012	502	323	261	250	12.7	(11.2 - 14.4)

*Occurrent deaths include individuals who were fatally injured in Utah, whether or not they were a resident of Utah.

“ Seeing my daughter struggle with prescription drug addiction is heartbreaking. But what’s even more painful is the effect it has on her children’s lives... my grandchildren. ”



Figure 1: The number of occurrent* prescription pain medication deaths by year, Utah, 2000-2012



The number of prescription pain medication-related calls to the Utah Poison Control Center decreased 20.7% from 2007 to 2012. Prescription pain medication-related calls comprised approximately 3.0% of all Control Center calls.³

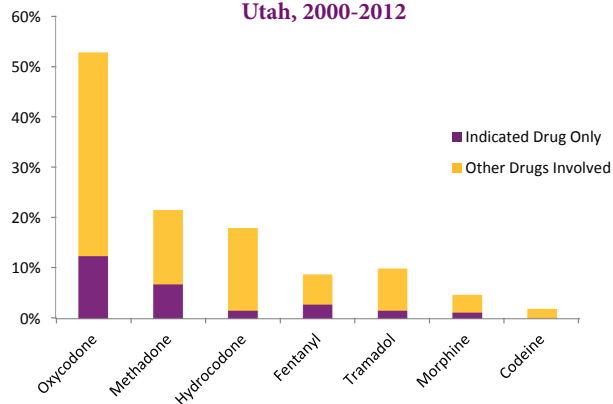
The prescription pain medication death rate has leveled off since 2010, when funding for the Prescription Pain Medication Program was eliminated (**Figure 1**).¹

Utah Trends

Since 2002, prescription pain medications have been responsible for more drug deaths in Utah than all other drug categories, such as anti-anxiety medications, over-the-counter medications, or illicit drugs. Prescription pain medication deaths have outnumbered heroin and cocaine deaths combined since 2002.¹

Deaths from oxycodone drugs (either alone or in combination with other drugs), such as Oxycontin and Percocet, accounted for 52.8% of all prescription pain medication deaths in 2012. Methadone was second at 21.6% (Figure 2).¹

Figure 2: Percentage of occurrent* deaths by top three contributing prescription pain medication deaths, Utah, 2000-2012

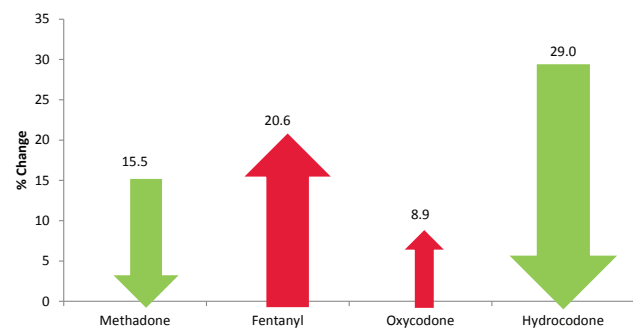


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However, the risk of death is significantly higher when methadone is involved compared to fentanyl, oxycodone, and hydrocodone. Fentanyl had the second highest risk of death per 100,000 prescriptions (Figure 3).

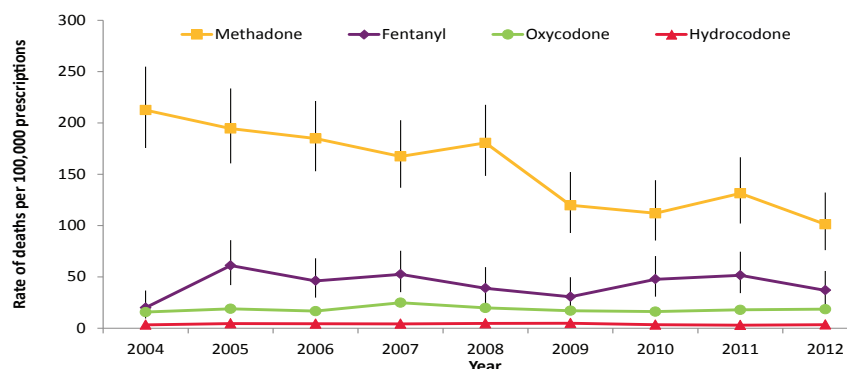
Deaths per 100,000 methadone and hydrocodone prescriptions decreased by 15.5% and 29.0% respectively from 2009 to 2012. Deaths per 100,000 prescriptions for fentanyl and oxycodone increased by 20.6% and 8.9% respectively during the same time period (Figure 4).^{1,4}

Figure 4: Percent change in the rate of occurrent* prescription pain medication deaths by drug type, Utah, 2009-2012



*Occurrent deaths include individuals who were fatally injured in Utah, whether or not they were a resident of Utah.

Figure 3: Rate of occurrent* deaths per 100,000 prescriptions by year and prescription type, Utah, 2004-2012



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Age and Sex

From 2009-2012, adult males had a significantly higher prescription pain medication death rate compared to adult females (13.8 and 11.5 per 100,000 adults) (Figure 5).^{1,2} Males 18 to 34 years of age had significantly higher prescription pain medication death rates compared to females of the same age groups (Figure 5).^{1,2} For ages 45-54 years, more females died as a result of prescription pain medications compared to males.^{1,2}

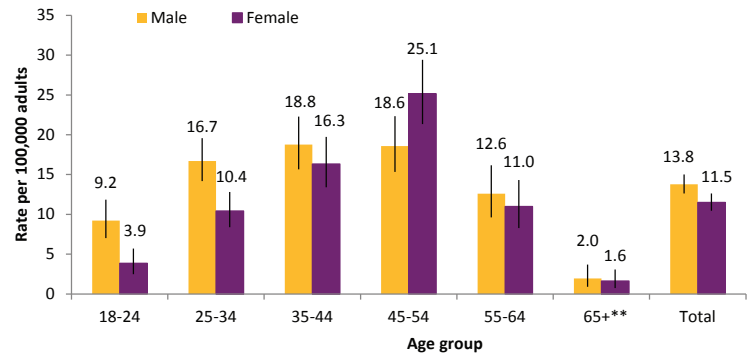
Location of Injury

The majority of adult prescription pain medication deaths occurred at a residence (93.0%). The second most common location was a hotel or motel (2.4%).²

The following Utah Small Areas had significantly higher prescription pain medication death rates compared to the state (12.8 per 100,000 adults):²

- Carbon/Emery Counties (37.8 per 100,000 adults)
- South Salt Lake (34.8 per 100,000 adults)
- Downtown Ogden (29.6 per 100,000 adults)

Figure 5: Number of prescription pain medication deaths per 100,000 adults by sex, Utah, 2009-2012



**Insufficient number of cases to meet UDOH standard for reliability, interpret with caution.

Prescription Opioid Death Circumstances

In Utah, the top five circumstances observed in prescription pain medication deaths from 2009-2012 were:²

- 73.1% substance abuse problem[‡]
- 67.7% physical health problem
- 65.5% current mental health problem
- 19.4% alcohol dependence/problem
- 12.7% history of suicide attempts

[‡]A circumstance in which the individual was noted as using illegal drugs, abusing prescription medications, or regularly using inhalants at the time of death, even if the addiction or abuse is not specifically mentioned.

Prevention Tips

- Never take a prescription pain medication that is not prescribed for you or take it more often or in higher doses than prescribed.
- Never share your prescription pain medications with anyone.
- Store prescription pain medications out of reach with the label attached and with the child-resistant cap secured.
- Keep track of the number of prescription pain pills that are in your bottle so you are immediately aware if any are missing.
- Dispose of all unused and expired prescription pain medications properly. If possible, take your unused prescriptions to a permanent collection site or drop-off event. If you can't find a drop-off site, dispose of your medications by following the guidelines at www.useonlyasdirected.org.
- For more tips on the safe use, storage, and disposal of medications, visit www.useonlyasdirected.org.



Resources

- Utah Poison Control Center <http://uuhsc.utah.edu/poison> 1-800-222-1222
- Use Only As Directed campaign www.useonlyasdirected.org

References

1. Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Prescription Pain Medication Program Database
2. Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Violent Death Reporting System, 2009-2012
3. Utah Poison Control Center
4. Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing, Controlled Substance Database

Last updated: October 2013



If your life has been affected by prescription drug overdose or addiction, the Utah Department of Health wants to hear from you. Share your story with the Utah Health Story Bank at www.health.utah.gov/bhp/sb/.

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