

Heroin Overdose Deaths Quadruple Among Older Millennials



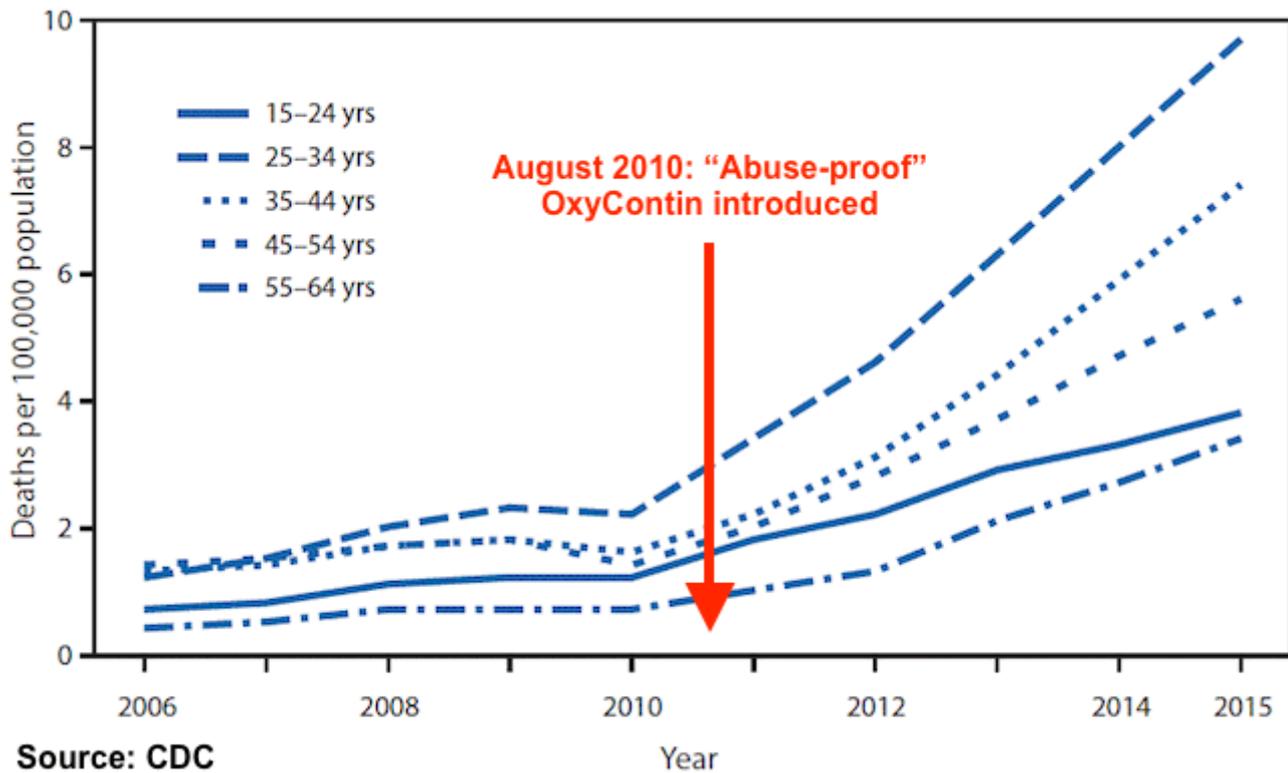
By Alex Berezow, PhD — January 5, 2017



Credit: Shutterstock [1]

The overdose epidemic sweeping the nation is hitting some demographics harder than others. New data released by the CDC breaks down heroin overdose deaths by age.

As shown below, heroin overdose deaths began to skyrocket in 2010. Of all groups, older Millennials (i.e., individuals aged 25-34) are the likeliest to die from a heroin overdose. In 2015, the mortality rate from a heroin overdose was 9.7 per 100,000 for this group, which is more than quadruple the rate in 2010 (which was 2.2 per 100,000).



This is a very shocking development. The overall mortality rate for Americans aged 25-34 is 108.4 per 100,000. ***That means more than one out of every 12 deaths among people aged 25-34 can be blamed on heroin.***

What happened? At least two things are to blame.

First, because people were abusing and becoming addicted to opioids like OxyContin, a new "abuse-proof [2]" version of the drug came out in August 2010. The pills could no longer be crushed into a powder for snorting or injection; instead, it squashed into a goeey mess. So, problem solved, right? Nope. Opioid addicts switched to other drugs [3], like heroin.

Second, like all street drugs, heroin is dangerous. As our resident chemist Dr. Josh Bloom has discussed [4] extensively, high-potency fentanyl is often mixed with or substituted for heroin. A few grains of it is enough to be lethal.

Therefore, as is the case with so many well-intentioned actions, abuse-proof opioids have made a bad problem even worse. Let's hope policymakers wise up.

Sources

(1 [5]) "QuickStats: Rates of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Heroin, by Selected Age Groups — United States, 2006–2015." *MMWR* 65 (52): 1497. Published: 6-Jan-2017. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6552a12> [6].

(2 [7]) Kenneth D. Kochanek, Sherry L. Murphy, Jiaquan Xu, and Betzaida Tejada-Vera. "Deaths: Final Data for 2014." *National Vital Statistics Reports* 65 (4): 46. Published: 30-Jun-2016.

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Links

[1] <https://www.shutterstock.com/pic-208189978/stock-photo-drug-syringe-and-cooked-heroin-on-spoon.html>

[2] <http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-05/science-un-crushable-oxycotin>

[3] <http://healthland.time.com/2012/07/12/new-abuse-proof-oxycotin-formula-pushed-addicts-to-heroin-and-other-opioids-survey-finds/>

[4] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2016/06/03/prince-was-killed-by-the-devil-in-the-room>

[5] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6552a12.htm>

[6] <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6552a12>

[7] https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr65/nvsr65_04.pdf