20% of Young-Adult Deaths Opioid Related, Study Finds

By Erik Lief — June 1, 2018

Reviewing statistics relating to all deaths in the United States during a recent 16-year period, researchers determined that fatalities of young adults from opioid abuse have increased nearly 300 percent over that time.

They also found that in 2016, the last year studied, 20 percent of all deaths in this age group were opioid related.

Using data from an online data base from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Canadian researchers focused on adult deaths aged 24 to 35. As a point of comparison, in 2001, only 4 percent of fatalities in this age group were connected to opioid use.

"We are increasingly seeing the devastating impact that early loss of life from opioids is having across the United States," stated Dr. Tara Gomes from St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. "In the absence of a multidisciplinary approach to this issue that combines access to treatment, harm reduction and education, this crisis will impact the U.S. for generations."
Among all age groups opioids "were involved in 42,249 deaths in 2016, and opioid overdose deaths were five times higher in 2016 than 1999," according to the CDC [2], and whether they were obtained by prescription or illicitly, they are "the main driver of drug overdose deaths" in the United States.

When it comes to the broader category of drug overdose deaths, which include those from opioid abuse, the five states with the highest rates of death in 2016 were:

- West Virginia (52.0 per 100,000 cases)
- Ohio (39.1 per 100,000)
- New Hampshire (39.0 per 100,000)
- Pennsylvania (37.9 per 100,000)
- Kentucky (33.5 per 100,000)