

The Prevalence of Opioid and other Drug Use in Pregnancy-associated Death of Florida Mothers from 1999-2005.

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Abstract

Background: Prescription drug abuse has been on the rise in the United States since the late 1990's. Rates for opioid (painkillers) deaths, opioid sales, pain clinics, and hospital admissions for opioid abuse have been rapidly increasing. Reasons for the rise in prescription drug abuse would include the perceived safety of these drugs since they are FDA approved, rise in pain clinics, online pharmacies, enactment of Patient's Bill of Rights, and patient advocacy groups demanding opioids. Very little is known about drug abuse, especially prescription drug abuse, in the deaths of pregnant women or women who were recently pregnant. The study will look at the types and prevalence of drugs in pregnant women or women who delivered a child within a year (pregnancy-associated death) compared to the same type of women who didn't use drugs.

Methods: Records for the pregnancy associated deaths of women in Florida were identified by the Florida Department of Health. 390 women were identified and the records for these women were obtained from medical examiner's office throughout Florida. At the time of the study, 382 of those records were mailed to MCHERDC. Toxicology reports were used to identify the drug using women by including those who used a depressant, stimulant, or both. Depressants contain alcohol, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, GHB, and opioids/opiates. Stimulants contain cocaine, amphetamines/methamphetamine, and pseudoephedrine/ephedrine.

Results: 140 women had a positive toxicology report with 84% (n=118) of them found to have a depressant in their body. Pharmaceutical opioids were the second most used depressant (29% n=34) and opiates were the fourth most used depressant (12% n=14). Most of the stimulants found in the women who used drugs was cocaine (81% n=35). The top three most common manner of deaths for women who used drugs were overdose (n=51), motor vehicle accidents (n=50), and suicides (n=19).

Conclusions: The drugs found in Florida mothers from 1999-2005 who died from pregnancy-associated deaths were mostly alcohol, cocaine, pharmaceutical opioids, and benzodiazepines. These deaths can be prevented through change in policies and education.