



DO PEOPLE WHO INJECT PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS (PAINKILLERS) HAVE A HIGHER RISK OF OVERDOSE?

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- We looked for links between the types of opioids people who inject drugs (PWID) injected (heroin, prescription, or both) and their experiences of non-fatal overdose.
- Between December 2005 and May 2014, we talked to 1,660 PWID from Vancouver about the type(s) of drugs they injected recently and whether they had experienced a non-fatal overdose.

QUICK FACT

INJECTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS MAY INCREASE RISK OF OVERDOSE, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE WHO ALSO INJECT HEROIN.

FINDINGS

- About 26% of participants reported injecting prescription opioids in the previous six months.
- About 6% of participants reported experiencing a recent overdose.
- Participants who injected prescription opioids but not heroin (about 5%) were not likely to overdose.
- Those who injected heroin but not prescription opioids (about 40%) were more likely to overdose than those who injected just prescription opioids.
- Those who injected both prescription opioids and heroin (about 20%) had the highest risk of overdose.

IMPLICATIONS

- There is a need to understand the risks related to overdose, as well as the harms of prescription opioid use.
- There is a need to consider prescription opioids in harm reduction programs, including safe injection sites and syringe exchanges, opioid substitution therapy, and take-home naloxone.

Lake S, Hayashi K, Buxton J, Milloy MJ, Dong H, Wood E, Montaner J, Kerr T. **The effect of prescription opioid injection on the risk of non-fatal overdose among people who inject drugs.** *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 2015; 156: 297-303.

