

REPORT ON OPIOID PAIN MEDICATIONS DISPENSED PER CAPITA

SOCIAL SERVICES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

What does the Department of Health's report on opioid prescribing practices in Utah indicate?

(1) increasing number of prescriptions per patient, total prescriptions, and high-dose prescriptions
(2) females receive more prescriptions than males but males receive more high-dose prescriptions, and
(3) individuals 65 and older receive the most prescriptions per capita by age group but individuals between 25 and 64 years receive more high-dose prescriptions. The Department of Health plans to provide another detailed report by October 31, 2016. This brief is for informational purposes only and requires no Legislative action.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Background

The report from the Department of Health (see <http://le.utah.gov/interim/2016/pdf/00002417.pdf>) is in response to the following intent language passed by the Legislature in H.B. 7, *Social Services Base Budget*, item 3 from the 2016 General Session:

The Legislature intends that the Department of Health shall report to the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst by April 30, 2016 on the total amount of opioid pain medications dispensed per capita, as morphine equivalent dosages, and may include other measures of risky opioid prescribing that the Department determines to be useful for understanding the influence of opioid prescribing on overdose deaths in Utah. Data shall be shared as far as is readily available back through 2000.

Data Trends

The Department of Health report indicates the following regarding the prescribing practices of opioids in Utah from 2002 through 2015:

1. Average number of opioid prescriptions per patient went from 2.98 to 4.98 (in 2014).
2. Prescriptions of opioids dispensed per 1,000 population have increased from 686.4 to 888.5.
 - a. "In 2014, 32.3% of Utah adults reported using at least one prescribed opioid pain medication during the preceding 12 months. (page 7 of the report from the Department of Health)"
3. Females have annually received significantly more opioid prescriptions per capita than males and in 2015 received 34% more than males (1,017 vs. 761 per 1,000 population).
4. Male's opioid prescriptions are more likely than female's, 19% vs 14% in 2015, to have a daily morphine milligram equivalent (MME) of 90 or higher.
 - a. Why is this information tracked? "The risk for overdose increases as daily MME increases; Baumblatt, et al found that the odds of overdose death was almost 30 times greater for those receiving an average daily MME of 81-100 compared to those receiving an average daily MME<20." (page 13 of the report from the Department of Health)
5. Overall morphine milligram equivalents dispensed have increased 76%.
6. In 2015 those aged 65 and older had the highest rate of opioid prescriptions at 2,109 per 1,000 population.

7. The only age groups that have seen a decrease in opioid prescribing per 1,000 population are the following:
 - a. 24 and under.
 - b. Females ages 25-34.

The Department of Health further reports that in 2014 about 24 Utahans (13 males and 11 females) died monthly from prescription opioid overdoses. Utah's drug poisoning deaths ranked it as 4th worst in the nation from 2012 through 2014. The Department of Health plans to provide another detailed report by October 31, 2016. For more information please see the full report by the Department available at <http://le.utah.gov/interim/2016/pdf/00002417.pdf>.