Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths

In 2016, West Virginia had the highest rate of opioid-related overdose deaths in the United States—a rate of 43.4 deaths per 100,000—and up from a low 1.8 deaths per 100,000 in 1999. The number of overdose deaths peaked at 733 deaths in 2016 with the majority of deaths attributed to synthetic opioids and heroin. Since 2010, deaths related to synthetic opioid deaths quadrupled from 102 to 435 deaths and deaths related to heroin rose from 28 to 235 deaths.

Opioid Pain Reliever Prescriptions

In 2013, West Virginia providers wrote 110 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons (2.08 million prescriptions). In the same year, the average U.S. rate was 70 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons (IMS Health, 2016).

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

Between 2007 and 2013, NAS rates in West Virginia significantly increased from 7.7 to 33.4 cases per 1,000 live births per year (CDC MMWR, 2016). The average across the 28 states included in the 2013 analysis was 6.0 cases per 1,000 births. Between 2014 and 2016 the rate of NAS in West Virginia rose further to 37 cases per 1,000 live births. In 2013, the southeastern region of the state had the highest NAS rate of 48.76 cases per 1,000 live births (Stabler ME et al, 2016).
HIV Prevalence and HIV Diagnoses Attributed to Injection Drug Use (IDU)

**U.S. Incidence:** In 2015, 9.1 percent (3,594) of the 39,513 new diagnoses of HIV in the United States were attributed to IDU. Among new cases, 8.2 percent (2,614) of cases among men and 13.2 percent (980) of cases among women were transmitted via IDU (CDC).

**U.S. Prevalence:** In 2014, 955,081 Americans were living with a diagnosed HIV infection—a rate of 299.5 per 100,000 persons. Of these, 18.1 percent (131,056) of males and 22.6 percent (52,013) of females were living with HIV attributed to IDU (CDC).

**State Incidence:** Of the new HIV cases in 2015, 74 occurred in West Virginia, with 15.2 percent of new cases in males and 17.6 percent of new cases in females attributed to IDU (AIDSVu).

**State Prevalence:** In 2014, an estimated 1,896 persons were living with HIV in West Virginia—a rate of 120 infections per 100,000 persons. Of these, 19.8 percent of males and 27.8 percent of females were living with HIV attributed to IDU (AIDSVu).

Hepatitis C (HCV) Prevalence and HCV Diagnoses Attributed to Injection Drug Use

**U.S. Incidence:** In 2015, there were 181,871 reported cases of chronic HCV and 33,900 estimated cases of acute HCV (CDC). Where data were available, 64.2 percent of acute cases reported IDU (CDC).

**U.S. Prevalence:** An estimated 3.5 million Americans are living with HCV, including approximately 2.7 million living with chronic infections (CDC).

**State Incidence:** In 2015, West Virginia reported 6,347 cases of chronic HCV and 63 cases of acute HCV at rates of 344.2 cases per 100,000 persons and 3.4 cases per 100,000 persons, respectively. Among acute cases, nearly 40 percent were attributed to IDU (WV.gov).

**State Prevalence:** Current state prevalence data are not available. As of 2010, an estimated 24,400 persons (1,660 cases per 100,000 persons) were living with HCV in West Virginia (HepVu).

National Institutes of Health-Funded Research

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) are supporting services planning research grants to address a dramatic increase in adverse outcomes associated with increased opioid injection drug use in Appalachia. The grants will help develop an epidemiologic understanding of opioid injection drug use, HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection risk, and other adverse health consequences of drug use in any of the 420 Appalachian counties (http://www.arc.gov/counties).

Additional Resources

- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Opioid Response Plan for the State of West Virginia and Drug Overdose Deaths Historical Overview 2001-2015
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Opioid Overdose
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Behavioral Health Barometer West Virginia, Volume 4 (2017)

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1 Includes transmission to individuals with injection drug use as a risk factor.
2 2015 estimate after adjusting for under-ascertainment and under-reporting. Data for 2015 were unavailable for Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Wyoming.