



RESEARCH BRIEF

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

LEADERS IN RESEARCH AGAINST THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The College of Social Work is at the forefront in the fight against the opioid epidemic in Ohio with multiple research collaborations, grants, and community partnerships. The College of Social Work is involved in a variety of studies to understand the impact of the opioid epidemic on individuals, families, and communities. Additionally, we are studying new, novel solutions to address opioid misuse and addiction. These studies include:

- ◆ Opioid Overdoses and Medical Marijuana Availability
- ◆ Changes in Rates of Child Abuse due to Opioid Overdoses
- ◆ Identifying Neighborhood Conditions related to Opioid Overdoses
- ◆ Evaluation Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma)

Opioid Overdoses and Medical Marijuana Availability

Drug overdose deaths are the leading cause of injury death in the United States, with prescription and illicit opioids being involved in most cases. The growth in opioid overdose deaths is partly due to an increase of opioid prescriptions provided for chronic pain management. This increase has not been consistent across the entire country: overdose deaths in California increased by 2% vs. 44% in Ohio from 2013 through 2015¹. One reason for California's slower rate of increase may be that it has allowed marijuana to be used medicinally since 1996. Those suffering from chronic pain may be medicating with marijuana, which has a practically nonexistent risk for overdose, as opposed to opioids.

We are examining the relationship between availability of marijuana at the local level and rates of opioid overdose deaths in California from 2012-2016. Availability of marijuana is measured using a database of marijuana retailer locations. We have been collecting locations of these outlets since 2012 using webscraping techniques from websites including Yelp and Weedmaps. Data on opioid overdoses will be obtained from California's Office of Statewide Health and Planning Development, which includes all hospitalizations where the patient remained in the hospital for at least one overnight.



Recent legislation in Ohio allows for the use of medical marijuana. If easier access to medical marijuana is related to fewer opioid overdoses, marijuana may become a preferred alternative drug therapy to opioid use for the management of pain. Analyses in California can directly impact policies related to local access to medical marijuana, including identifying specific regions in Ohio that may most directly benefit from this access. Our team includes Dr. Bridget Freisthler from OSU College of Social Work and Dr. Christina Mair at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, experts in spatial and policy analyses of drug use and health problems.

OBJECTIVES

- *Identify if medical marijuana availability is related to fewer opioid overdose deaths*
- *Understand how overdoses are related to child abuse and neglect*
- *Determine what neighborhoods are at greater risk for overdoses*
- *Evaluate whether interventions reduce child maltreatment due to substance use*

EXPERTISE IN OPIOID RESEARCH

Changes in Rates of Child Abuse due to Opioid Overdoses

Ohio is among the highest in the country in rates of opioid deaths. Children of addicted parents are affected greatly by this problem and the impact on the child welfare system has been devastating. In April of 2016, the Public Children's Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) surveyed Ohio's 88 Counties and found that 50% of children taken into state custody had parents with drug use as a safety concern, and of the children taken into custody, about 1/3 had a parent currently using opiates at the time of the removal.² Among younger children, the problem is even greater. More than 2/3 of children under the age of 1 in state custody had parents who used opiates, including heroin².

We are studying how rates of child maltreatment have changed due to changes in naloxone administration (a proxy measure of opioid overdose) from 2003 – 2015 across all 88 Ohio counties. We will also examine whether or not these changes differ by the type of county (urban, suburban, rural, or Appalachian), financing structure, and sociodemographics. This project is led by Dr. Kathryn Maguire-Jack and Dr. Bridget Freisthler at CSW.

Identifying Neighborhood Conditions related to Opioid Overdoses

We know that where a person lives contributes to a variety of health and mental health problems. Yet, little attention has been paid to the neighborhood conditions where opioid overdoses occur most often. We are studying what neighborhood conditions are related to higher rates of use of naloxone to reverse overdoses across the state of Ohio from 2003 – 2015.

These findings will be used to develop and implement prevention programs in the places at highest risk for opioid and heroin deaths. Dr. Bridget Freisthler is leading this project

Evaluating Ohio START

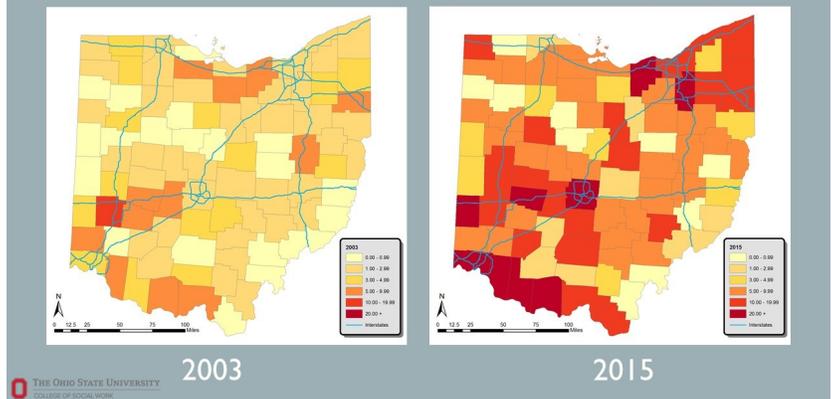
Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma

The College of Social Work is partnering with the Ohio Attorney General's office to evaluate Ohio Sobriety Treatment and Reducing Trauma (START) in 14 Ohio counties affected by the opioid crisis. Ohio START supports families with co-occurring substance abuse and child maltreatment. We are examining which elements are most successful in helping parents regain sobriety, maintain treatment, and reduce future recurrence of child abuse or neglect. Unique to this initiative is a particular focus on improving the well-being of the children affected by parental opioid use through addressing the trauma they have experienced. This project is led by Drs. Bridget Freisthler, Kathryn Maguire-Jack, Alicia Bunger, and Susan Yoon of the College of Social Work.

References

¹CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality. 2017. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>; ²Public Children's Services Association of Ohio. (2017). *The Opioid Epidemic's Impact on Children's Services in Ohio*. Columbus, OH: Public Children's Services Association of Ohio. Retrieved from: <http://www.pcsao.org/pdf/advocacy/OpiateBriefingSlides.pdf> on March 11, 2017.

Rate of Naloxone Administration per 10,000 People by County



ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The College of Social Work (CSW) has developed a long-standing and deeply ingrained culture of applied research and scholarship that permeates all aspects of our programs, informs our community service and engagement, and contributes to the greater good of the profession, society, and the world. The CSW is ranked 9th among all social work programs in public universities by U.S. News & World Report, and provides accredited BSSW and MSW programs to over 1,200 students a year. In addition, the college's PhD program has an average of 50 active students.

The Ohio State University College of Social Work has faculty expertise in child welfare and drug misuse prevention. The college is at the forefront in the fight against the opioid epidemic in Ohio with multiple research collaborations, grants, and community partnerships.

Contact information: freisthler.19@osu.edu

CONTACT US

The Ohio State University
College of Social Work
Stillman Hall, 1947 College Rd.
Columbus, OH 43210-1162
csw.osu.edu/research
Phone: 614-292-9229



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