

## Spring 2018

[Report on pan-Canadian opioid prescribing trends](#)

[What we're working on](#)

[New and notable from our partners](#)

[Did you know?](#)

[Where we'll be next](#)

[Learn more](#)

[Contact us](#)



## Report on pan-Canadian opioid prescribing trends

On November 22, 2017, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) released an analysis of opioid prescribing trends. [Pan-Canadian Trends in the Prescribing of Opioids, 2012 to 2016](#) examines 5 years of dispensing data from community pharmacies.

The total number of opioid prescriptions continued to grow during this period — from 20.2 million in 2012 to 21.5 million in 2016 — but the study also found that prescription durations were shorter on average, with fewer opioid doses prescribed at a time. Shorter prescriptions offer more frequent interactions between patients and health providers, which can aid the monitoring of the long-term effectiveness of treatment.

 **4.9%**

**Quantity of opioids dispensed in Canada declined between 2012 and 2016**

An in-depth analysis of data from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba found that fewer people (per 1,000 population) are being prescribed an opioid, despite the overall increase in the number of opioid prescriptions.

Prescription rates varied by age group, with seniors age 65 and older having the highest rates of opioid prescriptions. More than 1 in 5 seniors were prescribed an opioid in 2015–2016. 1 in 8 seniors who were prescribed an opioid were taking a strong opioid for 90 days or longer.



## What we're working on

### 2017 estimates for hospitalizations due to opioid poisoning

CIHI and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) are working together to provide a comprehensive picture of the evolving opioid crisis. This spring, PHAC will update the number of apparent opioid-related deaths that occurred in Canada in 2017, while CIHI will release estimated figures on the number of hospitalizations due to opioid poisoning in 2017. This fall, CIHI will release more comprehensive opioid-related harms data, with a special focus on opioid poisonings in smaller communities.

### Expanded reporting on opioid harms

CIHI is currently working to expand our reporting on opioid-related harms. Previous analyses have examined hospitalizations and emergency room visits due to opioid poisoning. This fall, in addition to opioid poisonings, CIHI will report on harms resulting from opioid use disorder (OUD) and from adverse effects in the therapeutic use of opioids. Stay tuned for more information in the summer issue of our Substance Use Surveillance eNewsletter.

### Pan-Canadian trends in opioid and benzodiazepine prescribing

CIHI is working on pan-Canadian and provincial rates of opioid and benzodiazepine prescribing. The analysis will examine 6-year trends (2012 to 2017) in the volume and types of opioids and benzodiazepines being dispensed to Canadians. This information will be released in June 2018. CIHI will also release an analysis examining new opioid starts pre- and post-implementation of the new prescribing guidelines. Look for this new information in winter 2018–2019.

### Data quality in opioid reporting to CIHI

CIHI has produced 2 new resources to help ensure that cases of opioid overdose are being accurately captured. In November 2017, CIHI released [Opioid Overdose Coding Direction](#), a bulletin that provides new coding direction to help hospital coders accurately capture cases of opioid overdose. In February 2018, CIHI released new [clinician guidelines](#) to also support the capture of opioid overdose cases. These guidelines are meant to improve clinical documentation around opioid overdoses. Together, these documents will help enhance the quality of opioid reporting data.



## New and notable from our partners

### Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

#### **Addressing the Opioid Crisis: Lessons Learned From the United States**

*A speaker series presented by CCSA and the U.S. Embassy*

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, with support from the United States Embassy in Ottawa, is holding a 6-city, cross-Canada speaker series to share knowledge related to the opioid crisis.

Experts from the U.S. will share learnings and innovative solutions related to the opioid crisis, alongside a local expert sharing the Canadian perspective. The events will include time for discussion among the panel and with the audience about how the work happening in the U.S. relates to and can inform measures to address the crisis that are being implemented in Canada.

U.S. experts will share their expertise related to monitoring, surveillance, lived experience, prescriber education and treatment. Dates and cities for this 6-part series are as follows: Vancouver, British Columbia, April 10; Edmonton, Alberta, April 11; Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 2; Toronto, Ontario, May 3; Montréal, Quebec, May 7; and Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 8.

Learn more and [register](#).

### Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) is the longest-running school survey of adolescents in Canada and one of the longest in the world. Results from the [2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey](#) show that in 2017, 11% of Ontario students in grades 7 to 12 (97,100 students) reported the non-medical use of prescription opioids. However, the non-medical use of prescription opioids has declined over a 10-year period, from 21% in 2007 to 11% in 2017. Get more information and [read about this year's OSDUHS](#).

### Health Quality Ontario

#### **Starting on opioids**

A recent report released by Health Quality of Ontario (HQO) found that more than 40,000 Ontarians were newly started on high doses of prescription opioids in 2016. This is despite evidence that those who receive prescription opioids at higher-than-recommended doses are several times more likely to overdose compared with those on lower doses.

The report also showed that of the 1.3 million Ontarians started on opioids at any dosage, nearly 325,000 were started with a prescription for more than 7 days. Evidence suggests that initial opioid prescriptions for more than 7 days have been associated with a higher risk of long-term use. [Read more about these and other key findings](#).

## Quality standards

To reduce the risk of addiction and opioid poisoning, HQO — in collaboration with patients, health care providers, caregivers and organizations across the province — now has a set of quality standards for opioids that outline for clinicians and patients what high-quality care looks like. 2 of the standards are about opioid prescribing for acute pain (short term) and chronic pain (long term), with a third standard outlining how to identify and treat people with opioid use disorder.

[Learn more about these standards.](#)

## Public Health Agency of Canada

On March 27, 2018, the Government of Canada released updated data [on apparent opioid-related deaths in Canada](#). Data was collected from the provinces and territories by PHAC. From January to September 2017, there were at least 2,923 apparent opioid-related deaths in Canada, and that number is expected to rise as more data becomes available. The data also showed that of these deaths, 92% were considered accidental. Updated statistics are expected to be released in June.

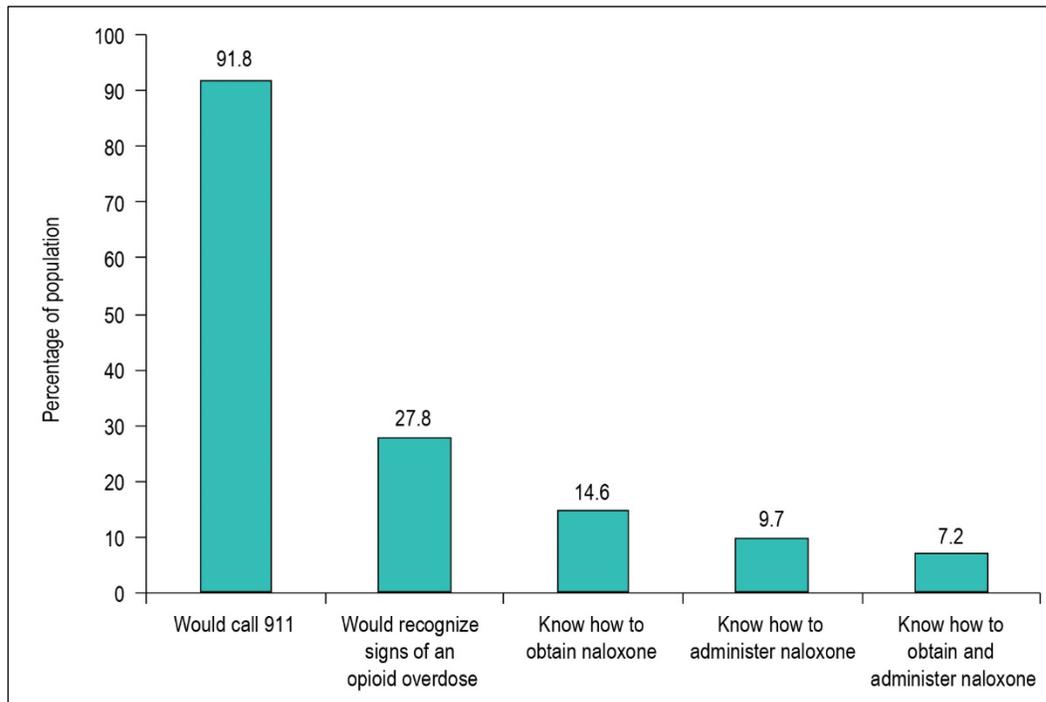


## Did you know?

### Canadian opioid awareness

In January 2018, Statistics Canada released survey results on Canadian [opioid awareness](#). This survey measured Canadian population knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with opioid use, as well as willingness to act upon opioid issues. Data was collected from every province from civilians age 18 and older. The survey found that the majority of Canadians — approximately 77% — are aware of the Canadian opioid issue. However, many are unsure of the signs of an opioid poisoning or of the actions to take to help in the event of an opioid overdose. 28% reported that they would know the signs of an opioid overdose and only 7% reported knowing how to obtain and administer naloxone.

**Figure** Willingness and ability of Canadians to assist in the event of an opioid overdose



To learn more about Canadian opioid awareness, you can read the [full survey results](#).



## Where we'll be next

Look for us in the poster presentations or stop by the CIHI booth and say hello!

[Canadian Public Health Association Conference](#)

Montréal, Que., May 28 to 31, 2018

[Canadian Pharmacists Conference](#)

Fredericton, N.B., June 2 to 5, 2018



## Learn more

### CIHI's opioid chartbook featured in *Healthcare Quarterly*

In March 2018, CIHI's [Opioid-Related Harms in Canada](#) was featured in *Healthcare Quarterly*. The article examines key findings from the 2017 report. To read the article, visit [www.longwoods.com](http://www.longwoods.com).



## Contact us

If you are not currently receiving CIHI's Substance Use Surveillance eNewsletter and wish to have future editions delivered directly to your inbox, send a message with "Subscribe" in the subject line to [opioidreporting@cihi.ca](mailto:opioidreporting@cihi.ca).

If you no longer wish to receive the eNewsletter, you may [unsubscribe](#) at any time.