

News Release

Public Health – Dayton & Montgomery County
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May 27, 2014

For Immediate Release

Release of Montgomery County Poisoning Death Review Report

Summary of the Montgomery County Poisoning Death Review: 2010 – 2013

There was a dramatic increase in the overall number of unintentional drug overdose deaths in Montgomery County, from 162 deaths in 2012 to 226 in 2013. Unintentional drug overdose deaths have increased continuously in Montgomery County since 2010, but the increase of 64 deaths from 2012 through 2013 is unprecedented.

The increase of an additional 64 accidental drug overdose cases from 2012 through 2013 doubles the increase of 32 additional unintentional drug overdoses from 2011 to 2012.

There was a significant increase in the number of deaths involving heroin, from 95 in 2012 to 132 in 2013. This continues a trend that began in late 2011 and is of great public health concern.

The decline in benzodiazepine mentions in unintentional drug overdose deaths observed during the past two years shows signs of reversing. Benzodiazepine mentions decreased from 87 (69% of all overdose deaths) in 2010, to 84 (65%) in 2011, to 70 (43%) in 2012, and then increased to 118 (52%) in 2013.

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There was a substantial increase in mentions of fentanyl in 2013, from 9 in 2012 to 34 in 2013. Twenty of those mentions were related to clandestinely manufactured fentanyl (perhaps combined with heroin, and/or cocaine), rather than prescription forms of the drug. In this report we classify those 20 mentions as “illicit fentanyl,” an opioid, rather than a licit prescription form of fentanyl, such as a transdermal patch.

The decline in prescription opioid mentions in unintentional drug overdoses observed during the past two years shows some signs of slowing. Prescription opioid mentions decreased from 94 (74% of all accidental drug overdose deaths) in 2010, to 81 (62%) in 2011, to 75 (46%) in 2012, and then increased to 100 (44%) in 2013. However, the percentage of prescription drug mentions in 2012 and 2013 remains fairly constant, around 45%.

The prevalence of any opiate mentions (Heroin, Prescription Opioids, and/or Illicit Fentanyl) in accidental drug overdose deaths has hovered around 90% for the past 4 years, despite the increase in accidental drug overdose cases.

The dramatic increases in unintentional drug overdoses in Montgomery County from 2012 through 2013 is an urgent public health problem that calls for collaborative intervention by the system of community partners.

Montgomery County Health Commissioner Jim Gross explains, “It is my hope the record-setting 2013 unintentional drug overdose deaths motivate the entire community to implement effective actions to combat this unacceptable problem. All of us need to participate in the solutions.”

Some of the ways the community is addressing the problem:

Billboards:

ADAMHS, Sheriff, and County Commissioners are teaming up to purchase two digital billboards to increase awareness about the dangers of heroin use. With a graphic picture of a deceased body with a toe tag – and the heading “Heroin: It’s Killing Us” – the image is meant to grab people’s attention and give them a phone number where they can call for help.

Initiative to assist opiate addicted moms:

Initiative to assist opiate addicted moms is underway to provide medication assisted treatment to women. The women will be provided access to supportive services such as outpatient counseling/therapy, childcare, transportation, housing, and help with applying for Medicaid.

East End “Conversation for Change” Project

Scheduled to begin in June, the East End “Conversation for Change” Project will target known opiate users in that area which has the unfortunate distinction of having two of the highest zip code areas with the greatest number of accidental drug overdose deaths in the county. Targeted individuals will be invited to participate in a session that will educate them on the dangers of heroin and other opiate use as well as treatment options.

Naloxone Distribution Expansion

Law enforcement officers now have the ability to carry and administer naloxone, the life-saving drug that will resuscitate an individual in the middle of an overdose. The Opiate Coalition is now seeking funding to assist all Montgomery County law enforcement departments to purchase enough medication so that every officer on the streets of Montgomery County can have this medication at their immediate disposal when responding to calls.

Drug-Free Coalition and Montgomery County Opiate Coalition Efforts

Two community efforts are underway to address the opiate issue. The Drug-Free Coalition and Montgomery County Opiate Coalition are two separate coalitions with complimentary missions. The Drug Free Coalition focuses on individuals who may be exhibiting some drug abuse behaviors but who do not yet have a substance use disorder through preventative efforts. The Opiate Coalition focuses on ensuring individuals have access to the proper array of treatment services and are educated on ways to prevent overdoses.

“We can and must win the opiate epidemic battle in order to save lives. This epidemic is killing us and it needs the collective attention and resources of the entire county,” said Helen Jones-Kelley, executive director of Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services.

“Treatment for opiate users is only one aspect in helping them overcome addiction. The other, is ensuring that services are easily accessible to support recovery,” Jones-Kelly stated.