

LONGITUDINAL TRAJECTORIES AND PREDICTORS OF NON-FATAL AND FATAL OVERDOSE AMONG OPIOID-USING POPULATIONS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Introduction and Aims: Most studies of opioid overdose are cross-sectional in nature, or do not clearly specify the opioid-using population under consideration, meaning we know little about how opioid overdose experience accumulates over time. We conducted a review of existing research to collate, assess and interpret findings describing longitudinal patterns of opioid overdose within populations of people at risk of opioid overdose.

Design and Methods: Articles describing longitudinal trajectories of overdose were identified by a literature search that included articles published up to 21 December 2018. The outcomes reviewed were non-fatal and fatal overdose. Exposures investigated included but were not limited to: the sociodemographic characteristics; health-related characteristics; treatment-related characteristics; and drug-related behavioural characteristics. We utilized the PRISMA checklist for systematic reviews and conducted quality assessment through a revised version of the Effective Public Health Practice Project.

Results: 62 studies describing overdose outcomes among people who use/inject drugs, use prescription opioids, are in opiate substitution treatment, are involved with the criminal justice system, and street-involved youth were identified. Study quality was impacted by variations in overdose definition and reliability of data sources. Longitudinal predictors of opioid overdose included a broad range of drug related factors. Sociodemographic and health and treatment-related factors (including blood borne viruses and mental health disorders) were also prevalent; with many predictors present regardless of opioid-using group or geographic location.

Discussions and Conclusions: Results provide evidence that longitudinal predictors of opioid overdose are comparable for opioid using populations, regardless of outcome of quality assessment.

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