

TRENDS IN HEROIN AND PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOID RELATED HARMS

Victorian Ambulance attendances 2012-2018 and
Emergency Department presentations 2008-2018



MONASH
University

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Background

Victoria has the highest Australian rates of heroin-related deaths, and these have rapidly increased in recent years.

Methods

Participants All Victorians 12+ years old.

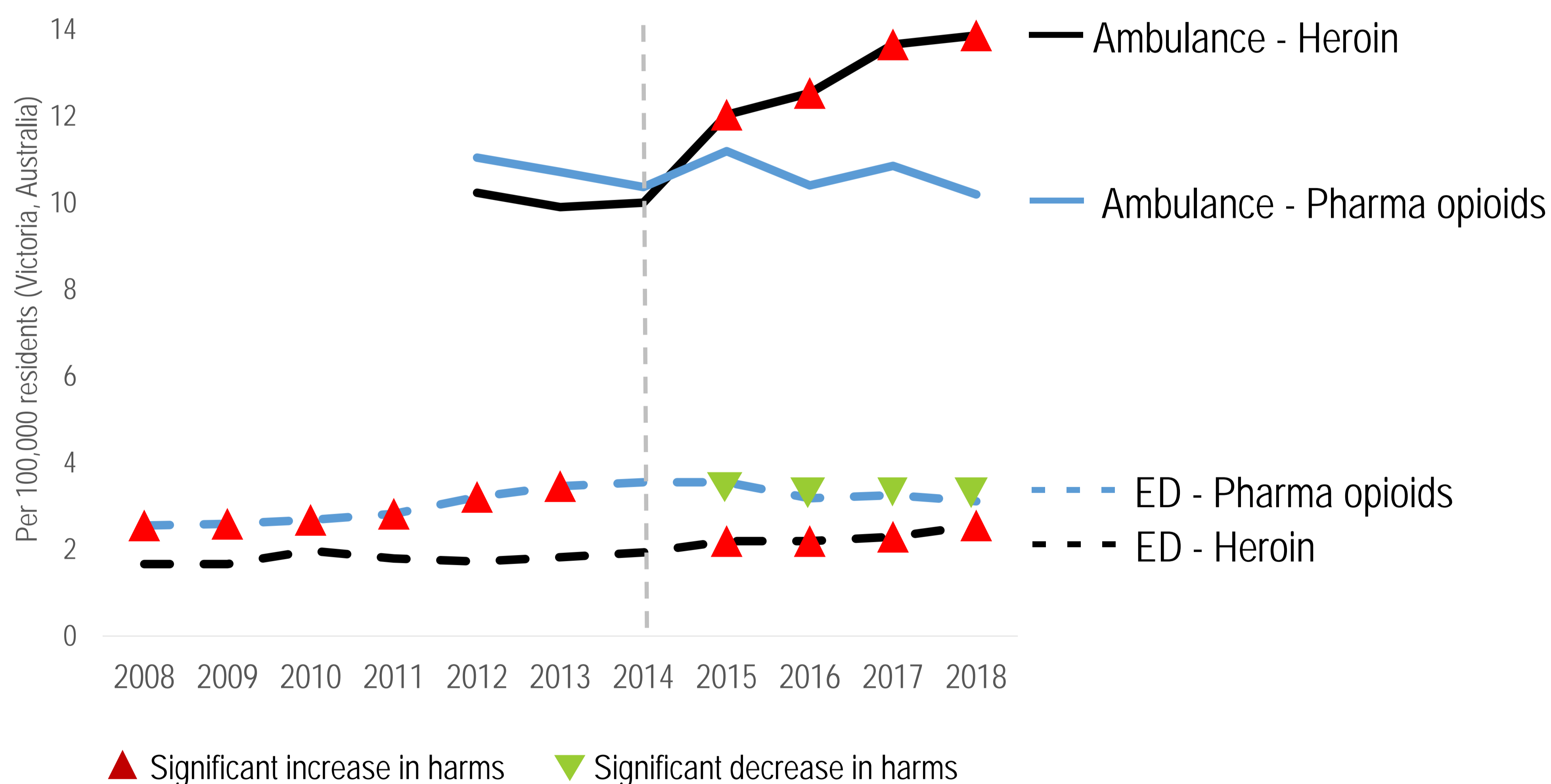
Datasets Opioid related attendances:
(i) Ambulance (Jan 2012 - Oct 2018; n = 30,045)
(ii) Emergency Department (ED; Jul 2008 - Jun 2018; n = 10,113).

Case extraction • Coded and free-text fields, manual checking of all cases.
• Cases in 3 month blocks, stratified by opioid type & sex.

Analyses • Interrupted time-series analyses examined time trends in population-adjusted opioid-related harms.

Results

- Significant increase in all-opioid ED harms 2008-2018.
- Significant changes at April 2014, when oxycodone was reformulated to be harder to crush and inject.



Following the 2014 oxycodone reformulation (harder to crush and inject pills), Victorian harms with pharmaceutical-opioid harms plateaued, while heroin harms increased.

Discussion

- This appears to be the first study in Australia to analyse population-level data to document the resurgence of heroin harms around mid-2014, following its 'glut' in the 1990s and 'drought' in the early 2000s.
- These increases occurred during the time of oxycodone reformulation, and may reflect a partial substitution from oxycodone to heroin.



More details:
Lam T, Kuhn L, Hayman J, Middleton M, Wilson J, Scott D, Lubman D, Smith K, Nielsen S. (2019) Recent trends in heroin and pharmaceutical-opioid related harms in Victoria, Australia up to 2018.
[Addiction. doi.org/10.1111/add.14784](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14784)

