

## COMPARING OPIOID HARMS IN AUSTRALIA AND CANADA: CHALLENGES AND FINDINGS

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**Introduction / Issues:** Canadian and Australian data agencies collaborated to compare estimates of opioid harms in each country. Opioids were selected for this project as they are a class of drugs causing concern in both countries. The goal of the collaboration was to compare opioid harms, assess differences and similarities of opioid use and treatment between the countries and understand the comparability of different data holdings.

**Method / Approach:** Australian and Canadian data for emergency department (ED) and hospital presentations were selected for comparison as they are national datasets, have single source data stewards and common data coding systems (ICD-10). Opioid harms were categorised as: Opioid poisoning, Opioid dependence, Other mental and behavioural disorders due to use of opioids and Side effects of pharmaceutical opioid use. Data were from 2016–17 and rates were standardised to the OECD 2010 population.

**Key Findings:** There are differences in the use of opioids between Australia and Canada which impact treatment pathways and harms observed in EDs and hospitals. Direct comparisons were challenging due to differences in database structures and healthcare system practices, however there were similarities in the profiles of people experiencing harms. The highest rate of hospitalisation for both countries was for Side effects of pharmaceutical opioid use, rather than poisonings. Opioids such as oxycodone, codeine and morphine, were the most commonly recorded opioid group related to opioid poisoning hospitalisations in both Canada and Australia.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** International comparisons are important for bettering understanding of data and uncovering drivers behind similarities or differences in problems such as opioid harms.

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