

# MD Snapshot-Prescribing Educational Resource

## New guidelines for treating opioid use disorder

In May 2021, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) released "[Opioid Agonist Therapy: A Synthesis of Canadian Guidelines for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#)".

The document does not present new evidence; rather, it synthesizes key recommendations for treating and managing opioid use disorder from existing Canadian standards, guidelines, expert opinions and best practices.

Twenty-six topics are covered in the five sections of the synthesis addressing: harm reduction, pharmacologic treatment options, special contexts, co-occurring concerns and opioid agonist therapy discontinuation.

The information is clearly and uniquely presented chronologically, that is, reflecting the stepwise approach that would most often occur in clinical practice. Additionally, two perspectives are covered per topic – clinical guidance for prescribers and regulated health professionals, and alignment with standards and care frameworks.

"Opioid Agonist Therapy: A Synthesis of Canadian Guidelines for Treating Opioid Use Disorder" is a useful tool to help physicians manage their patients with opioid use disorder.

There continues to be need for the treatment of opioid use disorder. The Public Health Agency of Canada recently released data on opioid-related harms covering the January 2016 to December 2020 time period.

Key findings of the report are:

- 21,174 apparent opioid toxicity deaths between January 2016 and December 2020
- In 2020, 6,214 apparent opioid toxicity deaths occurred (approximately 17 deaths per day), of which 96% were accidental
- Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 5,148 apparent opioid toxicity deaths occurred (April to December 2020), representing a 89% increase from the same time period in 2019 (2,722 deaths)

Read the full report here: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids-stimulants/>

## Additional reports and resources

### Renewed Focus: A Follow-Up Report on Youth Opioid Use in Alberta

Alberta's Child and Youth Advocate has released a follow-up report on youth opioid use. [Renewed Focus: A Follow-Up Report on Youth Opioid Use in Alberta](#) explores what has changed since the Advocate's first report on this issue was released in June of 2018.

In 2020, 95 young people under the age of 25 died from accidental opioid poisoning in Alberta. So far in 2021, 29 deaths were reported in the first quarter alone. If this trend continues, the number of young people lost to the opioid crisis this year will be the most devastating on record.

Read the full report here: <https://www.ocya.alberta.ca/adult/publications/ocya-reports/>

### Opioid Response Surveillance Report: First Nations People in Alberta

This surveillance report presents emergency department visits, hospitalizations, prescription drug dispensing from community pharmacies, emergency medical services, naloxone kit dispensing, supervised consumption service visits, and mortality data associated with opioids and other drugs in Alberta. The report shows disproportionate impacts of opioid use on First Nations people. Below are some key findings:

- While First Nations people only make up 6% of Alberta's population, they represent 22% of all opioid poisoning deaths from January to June 2020 (up 14% from 2016)
- Among First Nations people, in the first half of 2020, fentanyl and methamphetamine were the most frequent drugs causing poisoning deaths, occurring in 70% and 66% of all drug poisoning deaths, respectively.

Read the full report here: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-opioid-response-surveillance-report-first-nations-people-2021>

### Modelling Opioid-related Deaths During the COVID-19 Outbreak

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) developed a simulation model of opioid-related deaths that provides information on the number of these deaths that might occur during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 and 2021. The results of the model suggest that, under some scenarios, the number of opioid-related deaths may remain high or may even increase through the remainder of 2021.

Read the full report here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/data-surveillance-research/modelling-opioid-overdose-deaths-covid-19.html>

## **CADTH Environmental Scan on Models of Care for Chronic Pain**

The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) recently released an Environmental Scan: Models of Care for Chronic Pain.

The Canadian Pain Task Force Secretariat was a co-requestor of this Scan, which was conducted to gather information on models of care that are being used in Canada and other countries to address care needs of people living with chronic pain. The report highlights the models of care that are being used both internationally and within Canada, the patient-related outcomes associated with these models, the key issues and challenges faced when implementing the various models and lessons that have been learned. The information identified by the Environmental Scan may be helpful in informing local discussions regarding models of care for chronic pain.

A two-page summary of the report can be found here:

[https://www.cadth.ca/sites/default/files/es/models\\_of\\_care\\_for\\_chronic\\_pain\\_in\\_brief.pdf](https://www.cadth.ca/sites/default/files/es/models_of_care_for_chronic_pain_in_brief.pdf)

The full report can be accessed here (available only in English):

<https://canjhealthtechnol.ca/index.php/cjht/article/view/es0350/146>

## **Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) (webinar recording)**

May 2021 the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) assembled an expert panel that discussed findings from CIHI's newest report about COVID-19 and its [impact on harms caused by substance use](#). The panel featured:

- Matthew Young, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction;
- Lisha Di Gioacchino, a person with lived experience of problematic substance use who also works at the Community Addictions Peer Support Association; and
- Tracy Johnson, Director, Health System Analytics, CIHI.

The discussion focused on:

- What has been learned about patients who go to the hospital because of substance use issues;
- How the system could better support these patients; and
- How data supports decision-making efforts for these patients.

[Listen to this great session](#) to find out more.

## **Changes in substance supply and use characteristics among people who use drugs (PWUD) during the COVID-19 global pandemic: A national qualitative assessment in Canada**

People who use drugs (PWUD) may be at an increased risk of experiencing negative effects related to COVID-19. Border and non-essential service closures may have placed PWUD at an increased risk of experiencing unintended consequences regarding drug consumption and supply patterns, as well as

related outcomes. However, the extent of these effects upon this population is unknown. The current study examined how COVID-19 has impacted substance use supply and use characteristics among a national cohort of PWUD in Canada.

Read more:

[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395921001420?utm\\_source=Cyberimpact&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=CAPUD-Monthly-Updates-June-15th-2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395921001420?utm_source=Cyberimpact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CAPUD-Monthly-Updates-June-15th-2021)

## **DATA RELEASE – Health Canada: Drug Analysis Survey**

Health Canada's Drug Analysis Service (DAS) operates laboratories across Canada that analyze suspected illegal drugs seized by Canadian law enforcement agencies. These statistics are based on samples analyzed and may not be representative of all substances seized in Canada, nor of what drugs are circulating on the market. Categorization of substances is based on the [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act \(CDSA\)](#).

- A total of 6,462 opioids were identified. 70% were fentanyl or fentanyl analogues
- For samples containing heroin, 46% also contained fentanyl
- A total of 2,011 benzodiazepines were submitted for analysis, which represents a 255% increase over the same period last year

Read the full report here: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/drug-analysis-service/analyzed-drug-report.html>