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# Examining Opioid Overdoses

As many people know, drug-related overdoses are now the leading injury-related death in the United States, whereas many of these deaths are associated with illegal opioid purchases and prescription opiate pain medications. The case study by Bradley Ray at J. Urban Health, titled "Examining Fatal Opioid Overdoses in Marion County, Indiana," published in February of 2017, closely examines accidental opioid overdoses through the span of six years - from 2010 through 2015, in Marion County, Indiana. The study was important to the states statistics of opioid abuse and overdose.

In this opioid case study, many methods were used in order to receive these statistical results. The primary source of data examined in this study comes from the MCCO, which has jurisdiction over cases where the decedent has died as a result of casualty or violence; has died in a suspicious, unusual, or unnatural manner; or has died in apparent good health or found dead. (Ray, 17). The study was provided with 1256 people who had died by the cause of an accidental overdose in Marion County. In order to obtain data, the scientists first had to collect death certificates and toxicology reports. After reviewing the toxicology reports, it was found that 76.6 percent of deaths involved an opioid. Death certificates were presented to determine demographics such as age, race, gender, and marital status. A variety of opioids such as heroin, morphine, codeine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, oxymorphone, hydromorphone, and fentanyl were present in the reports. Another method used in the study was the analysis of trends regarding opiate prescriptions and drug crime labs. The examiners had one more step and that was to capture the changes in illicit drug markets and the availability of these drugs. This data was gathered through the county's forensic services agency.

A major trend was found in Marion County that is consistent with the recent analysis of drug use patterns by the fact that the decrease in available opiate prescriptions leads to a major increase in illicit opioid use. During the 1990s and 2000s, the drastic rise in prescription opiates

is well known and is commonly due to greater social acceptance, a variety of medical uses, and pharmaceutical companies' marketing efforts. As of 2012, the decrease in prescriptions for codeine and oxymorphone was apparent, however the decrease in prescriptions for all other opioids was not observed until 2013. With that being said, it is easy to understand that because legal prescriptions were not available, users would turn to illegal substances such as heroin to meet their needs. When the amount of controlled substances are not limited like a prescription would be, users are much more likely to overdose.

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# Works Cited

Ray, Bradley et al. "Examining Fatal Opioid Overdoses in Marion County, Indiana." Journal of urban health : bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine vol. 94,2 (2017): 301-310. doi:10.1007/s11524-016-0113-2. Accessed 6 December 2020.