



Addressing Injection-Involved Overdose Mortality by State

State-level data emphasize the opioid epidemic's impact on deaths related to injection drug use and viral hepatitis rates.

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The [opioid](#) crisis remains one of the greatest public health challenges in the United States. In an attempt to address this, data recently released by [HepVu](#), a leading organization that shares viral hepatitis data, show which states have the highest rates of injection-involved overdose mortality.

The opioid crisis has led to an unprecedented surge in overdose deaths across the country as well as an increase in new [hepatitis C \(HCV\) cases](#) transmitted by injection drug use. In fact, from 2012 to 2019, the rate of new HCV cases more than doubled.

"We know that the drug overdose epidemic is a dangerous and growing public health threat across the country," said HepVu fellow Eric Hall, PhD, MPH, the principal author of the study and an assistant professor at Oregon Health and Science. "As injection-involved mortality rates have skyrocketed, new hepatitis C infections have also increased."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately [2 million people in the United States are living with chronic HVC](#). There were more than 5,000 new cases of acute HCV and more than 107,500 newly reported cases of chronic HCV in 2021, according to the CDC. Nearly 60% of people with hepatitis report injection drug use.

The current data, based on a [paper published in JMOR Public Health and Surveillance](#), sought to better understand state-level trends in injection-involved mortality, meaning the proportion of overdose deaths involving injection. With this information, researchers hope to devise ways to reduce overdose mortality and introduce targeted interventions to prevent and treat HCV.

According to the paper, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Florida, Georgia and Indiana had the highest percent increases in the rate of overdose deaths that involved injection-drug use between 2010

and 2020.

When analyzing by U.S. region, between 2010 and 2020, the rate of overdose mortality deaths that involved injection-drug use in the Northeast and Appalachia increased much faster than the national average. The West had the lowest rate of overdose deaths involving drug-injection use in 2020.

“Without a robust viral hepatitis surveillance system, U.S. jurisdictions lack the full picture of the viral hepatitis epidemic—which is why these state-level data are so critical to target prevention programs and intervention for public health consequences of injection drug use, such as viral hepatitis and HIV infections,” Hall told HepVu.

To read more, click [#Hepatitis C](#) or [#Opioid Use Disorder](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[‘Fourth Wave’ of Opioid Epidemic Crashes Ashore, Propelled by Fentanyl and Meth](#),” “[Telemedicine Successful in Treating Hep C Related to Opioid Use Disorder](#)” and “[WHO Sounds Alarm on Viral Hepatitis Infections Claiming 3,500 Lives Each Day](#).”

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