

Deaths from drug overdose on the rise

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A study from the University of Colorado Denver has found a substantial increase in U.S. rates of death due to drug overdoses. This trend was present in all demographic groups considered, and was particularly acute among white Americans. Most likely a major contributor to this trend is deaths due to prescription drugs, use of which has increased more than fourfold in the past two decades.

The study, led by Richard Miech, PhD, MPH, associate professor in the Department of Health and Behavioral Sciences at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado Denver, examined data from the U.S. Census and a national register that tracks U.S. deaths by cause of death. The researchers, using demographic groups, then determined the percentage of people that died from accidental drug poisonings yearly.

"I know the drug companies are concerned about misuse of their products and have set up extensive systems to monitor and help prevent prescription drug misuse," said Miech. "However, the results of this study suggest that these efforts need to be substantially increased, which seems a relatively small expense in light of the billions of dollars in annual profit that these drugs generate."

According to the study, white men and women today are more than nine times as likely to die from an accidental poisoning than they were in the late 1960s whereas black men and women are about three times more likely to die from an accidental poisoning than in the late 1960s. According to a government report released in 2004, nearly 50 percent of

Americans take a drug prescribed by their physicians, meaning there are more drugs available and the possibility of abuse and addiction is significantly increased.

“I think most people don't know that the rate of drug overdose death has increased substantially in recent decades and that this increase is in large part due to deaths from prescription drugs (which now kill more people than heroin or cocaine),” said Miech. “Ideally, if people become more aware of the potential dangers of [prescription drugs](#) then they will use them more carefully.”

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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