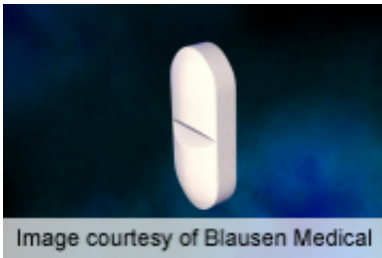


Opioids involved in most medical overdose deaths

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(HealthDay)—Opioid analgesics are involved in the majority of pharmaceutical-related overdose deaths, frequently involving drugs prescribed for mental health conditions, according to a research letter published in the Feb. 20 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Christopher M. Jones, Pharm.D., from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and colleagues analyzed 2010 data from the National Vital Statistics System multiple cause-of-death file to identify pharmaceutical- and opioid-related overdose deaths in the United States and the specific drugs involved.

The researchers found that there were 38,329 [drug overdose deaths](#), of which 22,134 (57.7 percent) involved pharmaceuticals. Of the pharmaceutical-related deaths, 75.2 percent involved opioids, 29.4 percent involved benzodiazepines, 17.6 percent involved antidepressants, and 7.8 percent involved antiepileptic and anti-parkinsonism drugs. Among overdose deaths involving opioid analgesics, benzodiazepines and antidepressants were most common. Among overdose deaths involving other pharmaceuticals, opioids were frequently implicated.

"This analysis confirms the predominant role [opioid analgesics](#) play in pharmaceutical overdose deaths, either alone or in combination with other drugs," Jones and colleagues write. "It also, however, highlights the frequent involvement of drugs typically prescribed for [mental health conditions](#) such as benzodiazepines, antidepressants, and antipsychotics in overdose deaths."

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