

Oxycodone overdose deaths drop 25 percent after launch of Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

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Oxycodone-related deaths dropped 25 percent after Florida implemented its Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in late 2011 as part of its response to the state's prescription drug abuse epidemic, according to a team of UF Health researchers. The drop in fatalities could stem from the number of health care providers who used the program's database to monitor controlled substance prescriptions.

"Forty-nine states have prescription drug monitoring programs of some kind, but this is the first study to demonstrate that one of these programs significantly reduced oxycodone-related deaths," said Chris Delcher, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the department of [health outcomes](#) and policy and the study's lead author. "Our work fills an urgent need for rigorous evaluation of these programs, so we can see what is working and what could be done better to help save lives and improve patients' health care."

Oxycodone is a frequently abused pain reliever, and the rate of oxycodone-caused deaths in Florida increased 118.3 percent from 2007 to 2010. Death rates began to decline in 2010 due to a variety of factors, including the introduction of tamper-resistant oxycodone formulations, law enforcement crackdowns on pill mills, and Florida House Bill 7095, all of which led to the closure of hundreds of illegitimate pain clinics.

Nevertheless, the research team attributed an additional 25 percent

decrease in oxycodone-related deaths directly to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, according to findings released in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* in March. Signed into law in 2009, Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program monitors individuals' controlled substance prescriptions and provides important and up-to-date data regarding prescribing trends in Florida.

The research team, which also includes Alexander C. Wagenaar, Ph.D., a professor in the department of health outcomes and policy; Mildred M. Maldonado-Molina, Ph.D., an associate professor in the department of health outcomes and policy; Robert L. Cook, M.D., MPH, a professor of medicine; and Bruce A. Goldberger, Ph.D., a professor and director of toxicology in the department of pathology, immunology and laboratory medicine, found that one factor contributing to the decrease was how rapidly the state's [health care providers](#) began to use the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to inform prescribing decisions.

They examined the number of [health care providers](#) in Florida who requested summaries of controlled [prescription drugs](#) filled by individual patients and found that Florida's [program](#) surpassed the rate of one of the country's model programs in Kentucky just four months after implementation.

"Previous studies have lacked the ability to examine differences in oxycodone-related deaths over smaller periods of time, which can obscure the effects of some prescription [drug monitoring](#) programs," said Goldberger, whose team used data on oxycodone-caused deaths from the Florida Medical Examiners Commission from January 2003 to December 2012 for this study. "While there is still much work to be done, we were able to tease out precise differences that showed us that Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program is having a sizable effect on the number of oxycodone deaths. This is a crucial first step in preventing overdose deaths and in establishing best practices for

programs like these across the nation."

Provided by University of Florida

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