

# Opioid-related hospital use up in elderly adults

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(HealthDay)—Rates of opioid-related prescriptions and health care

utilization are rising among seniors, according to two September statistical briefs released by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The reports relied on data from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey.

Audrey J. Weiss, Ph.D., and colleagues found that among patients 65 years and older, there was a 34.3 percent increase in the rate of opioid-related inpatient stays between 2010 and 2015. During the same time period, there was a 17.4 percent decrease in the rate of non-opioid-related stays. Similarly, there was a 74.2 percent increase in opioid-related emergency department visits during the same time frame compared with a 17.4 percent increase in non-opioid-related emergency department visits. Compared with non-opioid-related hospital stays and emergency department visits, those that were opioid-related incurred higher costs.

Asako S. Moriya, Ph.D., and G. Edward Miller, Ph.D., found that in 2015 to 2016, nearly one in five adults aged 65 years or older filled, on average, at least one outpatient opioid prescription and 7.1 percent obtained four or more prescription fills during the year. Elderly adults who were poor (9.5 percent) or low-income (11.3 percent) were more likely to have at least four opioid prescription fills during the year compared with middle-income (6.8 percent) and high-income (4.5 percent) elderly adults. Higher average annual rates of outpatient opioid use were seen for those in poor health (39.4 percent) versus those in excellent health (8.8 percent).

"The statistics in these reports provide important new insights into the [opioid](#) crisis and its impact on one of the nation's most vulnerable populations," AHRQ Director Gopal Khanna said in a statement.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text - Weiss](#)  
[Abstract/Full Text - Moriya and Miller](#)

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