

Research finds workplace injuries contribute to rise in suicide, overdose deaths

July 22 2019

A study co-authored by Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) researchers and published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* finds that an injury serious enough to lead to at least a week off of work almost triples the combined risk of suicide and overdose death among women, and increases the risk by 50 percent among men.

"These findings suggest that work-related injuries contribute to the [rapid increase](#) in deaths from both opioids and suicides," says study senior author Dr. Leslie Boden, professor of environmental health at BUSPH. "Improved [pain treatment](#), better treatment of substance use disorders, and treatment of post-injury depression may substantially improve quality of life and reduce mortality from [workplace injuries](#)."

To estimate the association between workplace injury and death, Boden and his colleagues looked at 100,806 workers in New Mexico, 36,034 of whom had lost-time injuries from 1994 through 2000. The researchers used workers' compensation data for that period, Social Security Administration earnings and mortality data through 2013, and National Death Index cause of death data through 2017. They found that men who had had a lost-time injury were 72 percent more likely to die from suicide and 29 percent more likely to die from drug-related causes. These men also had increased rates of death from cardiovascular diseases. Women with lost-time injuries were 92 percent more likely to die from suicide and 193 percent more likely to die from drug-related causes.

Previous research by the authors showed that women and men who had had to take at least a week off after a workplace [injury](#) were more than 20 percent more likely to die from any cause. They write that this new study highlights the roles of suicide and opioids as major causes of those deaths.

More information: Katie M. Applebaum et al, Suicide and drug-related mortality following occupational injury, *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* (2019). [DOI: 10.1002/ajim.23021](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23021)

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

Citation: Research finds workplace injuries contribute to rise in suicide, overdose deaths (2019, July 22) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-workplace-injuries-contribute-suicide-overdose.html>

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