

Pandemic tied to rising number of fatal opioid ODs

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(HealthDay)—Opioid overdose deaths rose in several states during the

coronavirus pandemic, according to authors of a new study who say their findings may help identify and assist at-risk people.

"Our work represents the first multi-state report with detailed analyses," said study senior author Mohammad Jalali, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School in Boston.

His team analyzed data on [opioid overdose deaths](#) in Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Utah and Wyoming in 2018, 2019 and during the pandemic.

Opioid death rates increased in five of those states—Alaska, Colorado, Indiana, North Carolina and Rhode Island.

Researchers also found changes in the types of opioids involved in overdose deaths.

Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana and North Carolina had simultaneous increases in deaths from synthetic opioids and decreases in heroin deaths.

Meanwhile, Alaska and Colorado had significant increases in the percentage of fatal overdoses involving cocaine, while those involving psychostimulants (drugs such as cocaine and meth) rose in Massachusetts.

Researchers also reported changes in the populations at greatest risk of death from [opioid overdose](#). Deaths among men increased in Colorado and Indiana, for example.

The findings may help identify and treat at-risk people, according to the study authors.

The findings, which have not been peer-reviewed, were recently posted on the preprint server *medRxiv*.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about the [opioid overdose crisis](#).

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