



Department of Health
Department of Alcohol and
Drug Addiction Services

News Release

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Contacts:

Ohio Department of Health 614-644-8562

Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services 614-644-8456

2011 Rate of Increase for Prescription Opioid Deaths Slows

Despite cutting increase in half, much more work still needs to be done

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Departments of Health (ODH) and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) announced today that while the percent of increase in deaths tied to opioid drug overdoses in 2011 was cut in half from 2010 (from a 26 percent increase in 2010 to a 13 percent increase in 2011), the total number of unintentional poisoning deaths in 2011--1,765--is still unacceptably high and Ohio's hard work must continue to fight drug abuse and help addicts recover.

“The slowed increase provides a ray of hope but underscores just how much work still needs to be done to free Ohio from the prescription drug overdose epidemic and the resulting growth of heroin use and overdoses,” said Dr. Ted Wymyslo, Director of the Ohio Department of Health. “Prescription drug abuse is a complex substance abuse issue and we are attacking on several different fronts.”

In 2011, the year represented by the new data release, Ohio laid the framework for slowing the abuse of prescription drug abuse under the leadership of Governor John R. Kasich. Closing the “pill mills” in southern Ohio through enactment of HB 93 in mid-2011 was a first and critical step. Expanding addiction treatment options, including accessibility of medication-assisted treatment, has been a key initiative of the Office of Medicaid and the ODADAS.

Other major strategies continued to be implemented in 2012, including the development of emergency room and urgent care opiate prescribing guidelines; a pilot Naloxone education and distribution program in Scioto County; and drug drop box projects in conjunction with ODH and ODADAS, and the Ohio Attorney General’s office.

“We are encouraged that the rate of increase is going down but the number is still unacceptably high,” said Orman Hall, Director of the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services. “As pill mills become increasingly scarce, we will see a shift to heroin and other non-prescription drugs so our interventions must be comprehensive and well-supported as we move forward.”

Funding for treatment has historically fallen short of need as approximately one out of ten Ohioans with addiction are able to access the care they need to achieve sobriety. Governor Kasich’s proposal to extend Medicaid for persons up to 138 percent of federal poverty level would help address this problem by making health care more accessible for both physical and behavioral health conditions and freeing up local funds that can then be used for additional treatment services.

[Click here to read the full analysis of drug overdose death data from 2011](#)

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