

Opioid prescriptions significantly decline in NM

Written by Staff Reports
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The New Mexico Department of Health announced July 12, that the amount of opioids prescribed in New Mexico have significantly declined, dropping by 5 percent for the first quarter in 2017, compared to last year.

Additionally, benzodiazepine prescriptions decreased by 3 percent over the same period. The drops come after Governor Susana Martinez enacted legislation to make it mandatory for healthcare providers to check a patient's prescription history in the state's Prescription Monitoring Program database when prescribing opioids, in an effort to stop doctor shopping for drugs.

There has been a 63 percent increase in providers using the PMP since last year.

"While this is encouraging news, there's a lot more work to be done," said Department of Health Secretary Lynn Gallagher. "Drug overdoses, mostly caused by opioids, tragically end far too many lives and we are committed to continue our fight to prevent and treat drug addiction in our state."

Under stronger prescription monitoring laws, dangerous prescribing practices have also seen dramatic decreases:

The number of patients with overlapping opioid prescriptions from different prescribers decreased by 13 percent from 1Q 2016 to 1Q 2017. "Doctor shopping", or going to multiple providers for prescriptions, will continue to fuel the opioid crisis.

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The number of patients with concurrent opioid and benzodiazepine prescriptions decreased by 10 percent over the same time period. Mixing opioids with other medications like benzodiazepine tranquilizers (such as Xanax, Valium, etc.) increase a patient's risk for overdose.

Newly released 2016 mortality data from NMDOH shows that the number of drug overdose deaths among New Mexicans rose slightly from 493 in 2015 to 497 in 2016. However, the state's population also increased during that period, leaving the overdose death rate of 24.8 deaths per 100,000 New Mexico residents unchanged.

Governor Susana Martinez has made drug overdose prevention a major priority of her administration and has implemented comprehensive solutions to fight drug abuse in New Mexico. In addition to strengthening PMP laws, earlier this year, Governor Martinez was the first governor in the US to sign legislation requiring all local and state law enforcement agencies to provide officers with naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdoses. This built on previous legislation enacted by Martinez to allow pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription -- expanding access to the life-saving drug.

Further, NMDOH and New Mexico Human Services Department have both received millions of dollars in federal grants to reduce opioid-related deaths, strengthen prevention efforts, and improve opioid surveillance data.

Under Governor Martinez's leadership, New Mexico has also removed prior authorization for Suboxone, expanded the number of methadone clinics, and the number of these clinics accepting Medicaid. There are also a variety of education efforts such as the "No Exceptions" drug awareness program, an award-winning public awareness campaign called "A Dose of Reality," participation in National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, and policy initiatives such as coverage of Naloxone through Centennial Care.

Drug overdose death is the leading cause of injury death in New Mexico and nationally, exceeding deaths from motor vehicle traffic crashes and falls. Many overdose deaths in New Mexico result from prescription opioid drug use. Opioids include painkillers such as morphine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone. Prescription-type opioids were involved in nearly half of all drug overdoses in New Mexico in 2016.

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Visit the [Opioid Safety](#) and [Harm Reduction](#) sections of our website to learn more. New Mexico substance abuse data and statistics are found in the [Substance Abuse Epidemiology](#) section of our website.

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