Scope of the Overdose Crisis: Fatal Overdoses Among People with HIV Experiencing a Nonfatal Overdose

1150

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BACKGROUND

- Drug overdoses continue to impact communities across Canada
- The drug toxicity crisis is most pronounced in British Columbia (BC), with age-adjusted opioid-involved mortality rates more than double the Canadian national estimate (48.0 per 100,000 persons in 2023)[1]
- The drug toxicity crisis in BC has reduced gains in life expectancy earned through antiretroviral therapies among people with HIV[2]
- Rough estimates suggest that rates of nonfatal drug overdoses are up to four times higher than fatal drug overdoses[3]
- **Aim: estimate the scope of the drug overdose crisis among people with HIV by describing how many experience a fatal overdose among those that have had a nonfatal overdose**

METHODS

SAMPLE

- Data are from the Comparative Outcomes And Service Utilization Trends (COAST) study (April 1, 2012–March 31, 2020), a linkage of administrative health datasets that includes information on all known people with HIV in BC (N=11,050)

MEASURES

- Nonfatal overdoses: defined using records of hospitalizations, emergency department visits, physician visits (ICD-9, ICD-10 codes)
- Fatal overdoses: defined using ICD-10 codes for the underlying cause of death in Vital Statistics records[4]

REFERENCES

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A **small proportion** of people with HIV who had a nonfatal overdose later died of a fatal overdose. This emphasizes opportunities for crucial interventions to prevent overdose death.

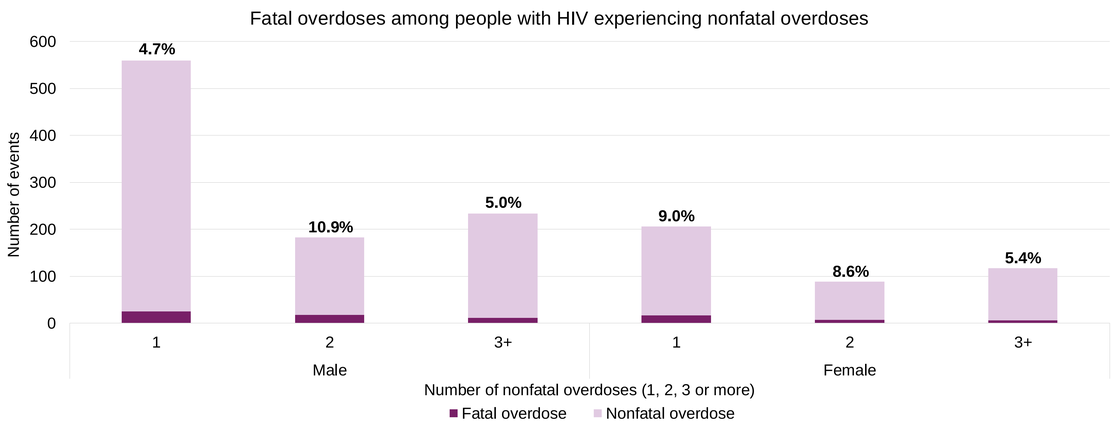


Figure 1. Number of people with HIV who had a fatal overdose among those that had a nonfatal overdose, by sex (n=11,049). Percentages represent the proportion of fatal overdoses among people who had a nonfatal overdose.

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RESULTS

- Of people with HIV who experienced a nonfatal overdose (n=1,304, 11.8%), 6.4% (n=84) died of a fatal overdose
- Nonfatal overdoses per person ranged from 0-42 (Fig. 2A)
- Of people who had at least one nonfatal overdose, most had one (55.5%); 2.4% had ≥10 nonfatal overdoses
- The highest proportion of fatal overdoses was among people who had two nonfatal overdoses (Fig. 2B)
- Among males with HIV, 10.2% (n=922) had at least one nonfatal overdose throughout the study period, compared to 18.9% (n=381) of females with HIV (p<0.0001)

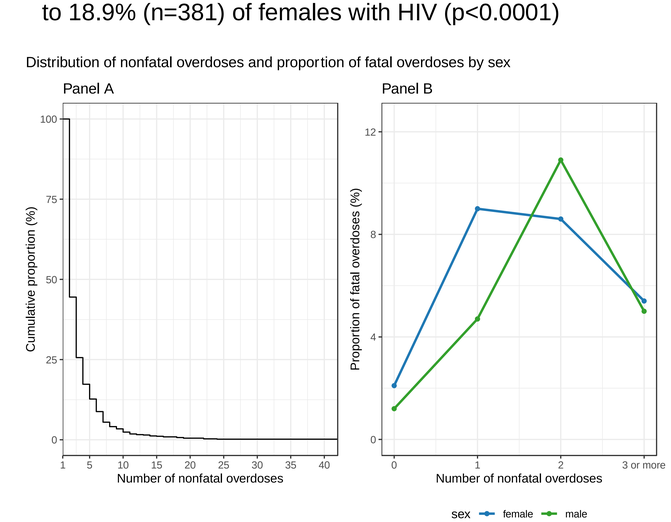


Figure 2. (A) Cumulative proportion of the number of nonfatal overdoses among people who had any nonfatal overdose (B) The proportion of fatal overdoses among people who experienced a nonfatal overdose by sex.

CONCLUSIONS

- The breadth of the overdose crisis stretches far beyond those who die of an overdose
- We need to link people with HIV who experience a nonfatal overdose with appropriate services to prevent fatal overdose
- Limitations: underestimation of nonfatal overdose rates
  - We only estimate hospital-attended nonfatal overdoses

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