

# Study finds link between opioid addiction and criminal justice system

07-12-18 Category: Addiction, Addiction Treatment, Opioid



Over 50 percent of Americans who suffer from an opioid or heroin use disorder have also had contact with the criminal justice system, according to a recent [study](#) published in the JAMA Network Open. Tyler Winkelman, M.D., M.Sc. of Hennepin Healthcare in Minneapolis, and one of the co-authors of the study, observed that an increase in the intensity of opioid use led to a corresponding spike in the involvement with the criminal justice system.

“There have been reports that jails and prisons are bearing the brunt of the opioid epidemic, but we didn’t know nationally how many people who use opioids were involved in the criminal justice system,” said Winkelman. Winkelman also elaborated that any form of interaction with the criminal justice system would cause numerous problems, as it often resulted in delayed treatment. Moreover, the possibility of incarceration could force opioid users to withdraw from substance use, lowering their chance of receiving treatment after release.

In the wake of the opioid epidemic, experts say that it is paradoxical that prisons nationwide are mandated by law to ensure evidence-based health care for heart ailments, HIV, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and other physical health issues, while people with opioid

use disorders are generally recommended detoxification, which can be ineffective in some cases. The research suggests that detoxification could heighten the risk of overdose death due to lack of tolerance and painful withdrawal.

In the recent years, this study might be the first-of-its-kind to quantify the independent association between the increasing levels of opioid use and the criminal justice system involvement, according to Winkelman. In the course of their investigation, the researchers analyzed records of individuals in the age group of 18 to 65 from the 2015-2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

With the nation reeling in the devastating opioid epidemic, the need for life-saving medications and evidence-base treatments is high. However, with addictive prescription drugs being sneaked into prisons, state prison authorities say that such dangerous drugs can pose a threat to the safety and security of the prison system. Almost all law enforcement agencies across the state are equipped with naloxone, a drug sold under the brand name of Narcan, which reverses the deadly effects of an opioid or heroin overdose. Several reports show that authorities have already thwarted innumerable tragedies statewide because of timely Narcan interventions.

### Leading a drug-free life

As per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), doctors' act of writing millions of prescriptions for addictive opioids has fueled the deadly epidemic that is destroying the United States. In fact, nearly half of all drug overdose deaths across the country involve a prescription opioid. Additionally, the [CDC](#) also reported that from 1999 to 2016, more than 350,000 people died from drug overdoses involving opioids, both prescription and illicit ones.

With millions of Americans finding themselves languishing in throes of addiction, medical science experts believe that though opioids are addictive substances capable of triggering compulsive drug-seeking urges in chronic users, full-blown addiction is the result of complete emotional dependence on opioids. The need of the hour is to expand access to customized opioid addiction treatment programs at professional rehabs to reverse the negative effects of drugs and facilitate long-lasting recovery. Additionally, alternative therapies to combat addiction and compulsive drug-seeking behaviors can also go a long way in improving an individual's overall quality of life.

When wondering where to start with finding help for addiction to prescription opioids, one needn't look further than Sovereign Health to avail the finest treatment options at our reputed prescription drug addiction treatment centers. You may also call at our 24/7 helpline number or chat online for more information on our [residential prescription drugs detox centers](#).