The United States Opioid Epidemic
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Introduction
Opioid addiction and death among individuals in the United States is a rising problem. In 2015 alone, a total of 33,091 people died as a result of opioids, representing a 300% increase since 1999. Opioid overdose deaths have now surpassed motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of accidental death. While other areas of the world are experiencing similar problems, it is most concentrated in the United States, where 80% of the world's opioids are consumed. The opioid epidemic also has an impact on local communities, such as Rochester, New York. This has led to calls for the development and implementation of strategies to fight the opioid epidemic at both the national and local levels.

The Problem
- The opioid epidemic is affecting the Rochester, NY area.
- In 2014, there were a total of 60 opioid-related deaths in Monroe County, a 76% increase from 2010 and a 200% increase from 2003.
- It is challenging to obtain reliable data on opioid deaths in Rochester.
- Variation in the numbers presented by various sources.
- No precise method for obtaining data on opioid deaths.

Rates of opioid deaths were calculated using data on opioid deaths from the NY State Department of Health and 2014 census estimates by county.
- Some argue that the opioid problem in Rochester is not as bad as it is in other NY cities.
- Heroin risks include sharing needles, injecting in private, and the mixing of heroin and fentanyl (an opioid with strong effects intended for severe pain) without the buyer knowing.
- Fentanyl has been a significant factor in the increase of overdose deaths.

The Monroe County Opioid Task Force
- Involves multi-sector cooperation

Local Solution
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Possible Solutions
- Healthcare providers
- Treatment centers
- Law enforcement personnel
- Recovery groups
- Citizens

Primary efforts:
- Eliminating insurance barriers to treatment
- Educating the public
- Supporting the passage of opioid legislation

Pain Management Education
- Most opioid addicts started out on prescription pain relievers
- Prescriptions are sometimes written for unnecessary circumstances
- For pain that does not warrant opioid pain relief
- For longer durations than necessary
- Healthcare providers should be required to attend training to learn which types of pain warrant opioids
- Monitoring systems could track patient medical history and dosages prescribed by doctors

References

Contact
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Increased Availability of Narcan
- Narcan is a drug administered to individuals who have overdosed in order to save them.
- Many police officers now carry Narcan.
- By making Narcan available without a prescription, family and friends of addicts could save their loved ones from death.

Expansion of Treatment
- More successful treatment is needed so all addicts can receive it.
- Successful treatment usually incorporates both the use of medication and counseling.

Supervised Injection Sites
- Supervised injection sites are safe locations where addicts can go to inject heroin.
- Clean needles and medical staff are available.
- Narcan is on hand in case of overdose.
- Addicts not forced to inject in private where no one is around to administer Narcan.

Increased Heroin Use
- 3 of 4 heroin users started out abusing prescription opioids.
- Prescription opioids are expensive and difficult to obtain.
- Heroin risks include sharing needles, injecting in private, and the mixing of heroin and fentanyl (an opioid with strong effects intended for severe pain) without the buyer knowing.
- Fentanyl has been a significant factor in the increase of overdose deaths.

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Medication
- Buprenorphine is an opioid that reduces the risk of overdose and dependency in addicts.
- The brain is tricked into thinking it has received the addictive opioid and functions normally.
- Addicts are less likely to crave it, so they can slowly be prescribed less and less.

Counseling
- • Addicts return to a normal lifestyle.
- • Support system to help them understand how they became addicted, how to avoid relapsing, and how to move on.
- • Addiction often takes on a toll on personal relationships, so support from friends and family is important.

Demographics
- Risk factors for overdose
  - Non-Hispanic White males
  - 18-25 years old
  - Residence in large, urban areas

Although these are the biggest risk factors, heroin use is increasing for both men and women of almost all ages. Overdose deaths among women grew more than five times from 1999 to 2010.