Recent highlights


Access to treatment

- Funding pilot projects on injectable opioid agonist treatment
- Improving access to treatment services through an Emergency Treatment Fund that has mobilized over $300M for provinces and territories
- Facilitated opioid agonist treatment by allowing the import of medications approved elsewhere, methadone prescribing and the use of diacetylmorphine and hydromorphone
- Supporting up to an additional 25 community-based opioid agonist treatment sites in First Nations and Inuit communities
- Funding pilot projects on safer supply and injectable opioid agonist treatment through Substance Use and Addictions Program

Access to harm reduction

- Approved 40 supervised consumption sites which have been visited more than 2.1 million times, reversed over 16,000 overdoses without a single death at a site, and made over 74,000 referrals to health and social services
- Supported the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, which provides some legal protection for individuals who seek emergency help during an overdose
- Continued facilitation of access to naloxone, including remote communities and isolated First Nations and Inuit communities
- Announced finalists of the Drug Checking Technology Challenge

Awareness and prevention

- Expanding public awareness around opioids and the harms of stigma:
  - Know More Campaign awareness tour for teenagers and young adults that has visited nearly 200 sites
  - Distributed more than 1 million wallet cards
  - Videos on opioids, stigma, and responding to an overdose viewed more than 16 million times
- Supported the development of opioid prescribing guidelines and national treatment guidelines for opioid use disorders
- Sharing best practices for addressing substance use stigma within the Canadian health system, including through use of compassionate and non-stigmatizing language

Tainted drug supply

- Working with domestic and international partners to reduce the illegal opioid supply
- Supporting education and training for law enforcement
- Equipped border agents with tools to intercept fentanyl and other dangerous substances at the border
  - Seized more than 5kg of fentanyl at the border in 2018-2019
- Opioids were identified 21,725 times in exhibits* submitted by law enforcement and public health officials in 2019

Evidence

- Continuing to engage with the Canadian Pain Task Force to assess best and leading practices that could improve the prevention and management of chronic pain in Canada, including the release of a report on the state of chronic pain in Canada
- Coordinating national data collection and publishing quarterly reports on apparent opioid related deaths and harms

*Note: an exhibit may contain more than one opioid
Deaths

In 2019:

- **3,823** Apparent opioid-related deaths: 94% were accidental. Among accidental opioid-related deaths: 3 in 4 were male.
- 68% were among young and middle aged adults (20-49 years).
- 31% were among older adults (≥ 50 years).

Hospitalizations

- **4,435** Opioid-related poisoning hospitalizations: 62% were accidental. Among accidental hospitalizations: 3 in 5 were male.
- 49% were among young and middle aged adults (20-49 years).
- 46% were among older adults (≥ 50 years).

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- **>21,000** EMS responses for a suspected opioid overdoses.
- Based on available data from 9 provinces and territories: 3 in 4 were male.
- 75% were among young and middle aged adults (20-49 years).
- 22% were among older adults (≥ 50 years).

Apparent opioid-related death data from BC and QC (2018, 2019) includes deaths related to all illicit drugs including, but not limited to, opioids. Rates reported for apparent opioid-related death have not been adjusted for existing differences in provincial and territorial age distributions. Data on opioid-related poisoning hospitalizations were available from the Discharge Abstract Database (DAD), a national administrative database from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI); data from Quebec were not available at time of analysis. There is currently no national case definition for suspected opioid-related overdoses attended by Emergency Medical Services; each region reports EMS data based on their respective provincial/territorial case definition. New or revised data reported will be reflected in future updates.

*Among deaths with completed investigations from six provinces*