The changing nature of opioid overdose deaths in Australia

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Background
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Methods

• Extracted data from the National Coronial Information System

• Complexity of heroin morphine and codeine deaths

• Forensic toxicologist advice to differentiate between these deaths

• Heroin deaths underestimated?
Results

- Heroin only
- Morphine only
- Methadone only
- Codeine only
- Oxycodone only
- Fentanyl only
- Bup only
- Several opioids
Discussion

Summary:

- Opioids other than heroin comprise a larger proportion of opioid overdose deaths in 2012 compared to the 1990s

- Pharmaceutical opioids combined constituted the largest proportion (70%) of deaths in 2012

- Although heroin deaths on their own still comprise 30%

- Heroin deaths are still increasing
Discussion

Future work:

• Standardising deaths to population rates

• Standardising by prescribing – DDD per million

• What is driving the trend?
  • Is it people who inject drugs?
  • People with chronic pain?
  • Intentional or accidental overdose?

• All of these issues will have an impact on how we respond to the increasing trend in opioid overdose deaths in Australia