

Evaluation of the switch from daily supervised consumption to take-home prescriptions of methadone on methadone-related mortality during the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Daniyar Aldabergenov

Institute of Pharmaceutical Science, November 2021

Introduction

- Opioid substitution therapy:
 - Methadone and buprenorphine are prescribed (*Neale et al., 2019*);
 - Effective for opioid dependence treatment (*Johnson & Richert, 2019*).



(n.a., n.d.)

Introduction

- Switch from directly supervised consumption to take-home prescriptions due to COVID-19 (*Public Health England, 2020*).



Aim

To evaluate the impact of the change in how methadone was dispensed during the first COVID-19 wave on methadone-related mortality in England



(n.a., n.d.)



(n.a., n.d.)



(n.a., n.d.)

Methods

- **The National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths (NPSAD)**

- NPSAD receives reports from over 87% of English coronial jurisdictions (n=71/82) for deaths related to psychoactive drug use (Yoganathan *et al.*, 2021).
- Coronial inquest files include the in-life prescribing details of decedents.
- Ethics are not required as all individuals are deceased.

- **Case Identification**

- Retrospective analysis: Cases reported to NPSAD before 23rd of April 2021;
- Interrupted time-series between 23rd March and 22nd June for years 2016-2020 (3 month period);
- Prescribed methadone
 - Missing data – 8% (n=46/550)



(Ackerman, MC., 2014)

Methods

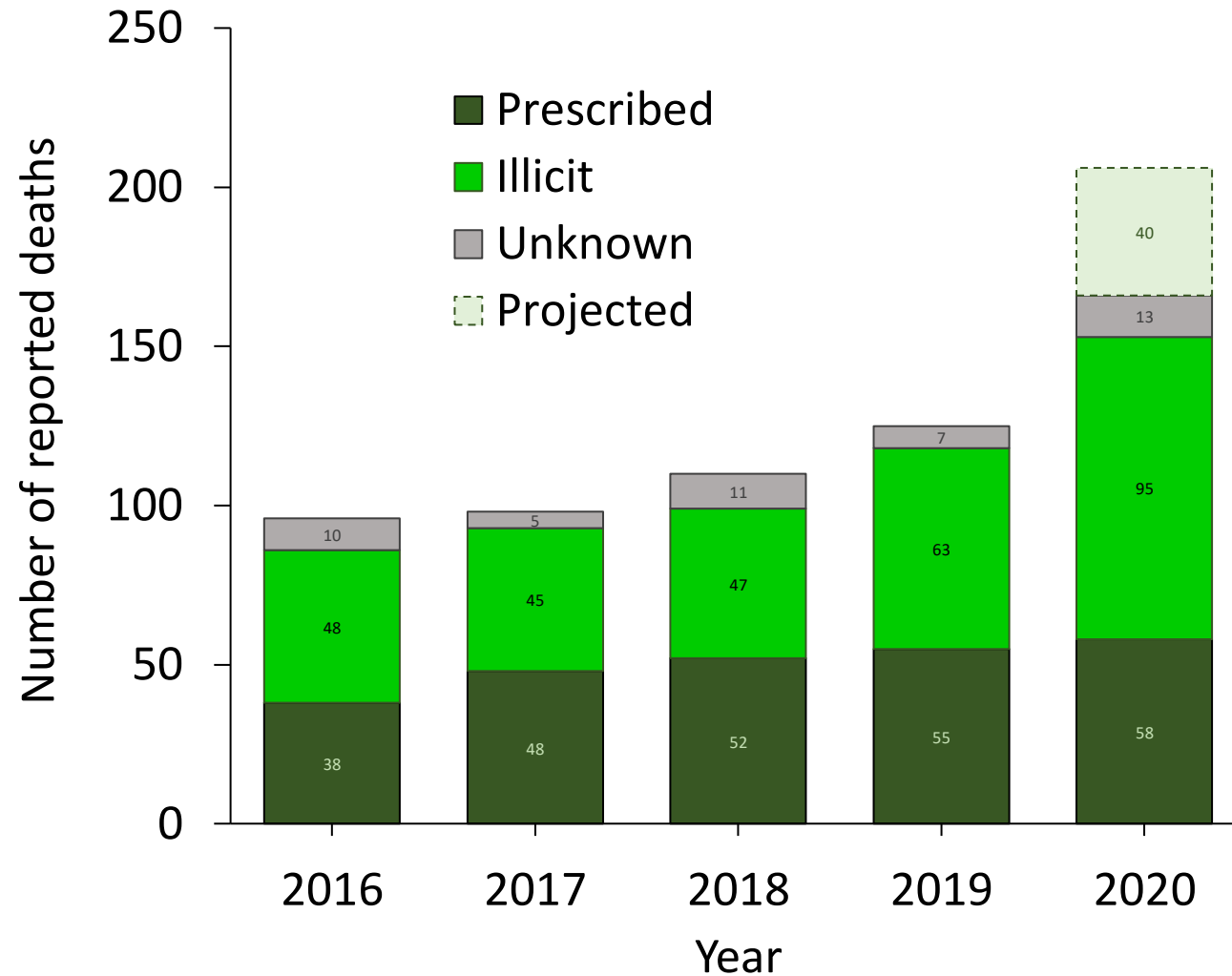
- **Data analysis**

- IBM® SPSS™ Statistics for Windows version 25 and Microsoft Excel 365.
- Projection of 2020:
 - Date of death → conclusion of the coroner = 7-10 months;
 - Before the 23rd of April 2021 – 85% of 2020 cases reported according to previous reporting statistics.



(Frakt, A., 2015)

Results



Conclusion

Switch to take-home methadone prescriptions:

- Mortality rates in individuals prescribed methadone were not affected;
- Take-home methadone might, as a result of diversion, be causing overdose deaths in the out-of-treatment population.



(n.a., 2018)

Conclusion

Switch to take-home methadone prescriptions:

- This presents a dilemma: Should the safety of people not in treatment be protected by imposing the restrictions that directly supervised consumption places on those in treatment?

Acknowledgements

Dr Caroline Copeland

Dr Nicola Kalk

Professor Sir John Strang

Dr Jenny Scott

Dr Michael Kelleher

Miss Laura Reynolds

Questions



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

References

- Ackerman, McC. (2014) U.K. Sees Staggering Rise In 'Legal High' Deaths. The Fix. [online]. Available: <https://www.thefix.com/content/so-called-legal-high-deaths-uk-rise-800-three-years> (Accessed 18 October 2021);
- Frakt, A. (2015) Why opioid substitution therapy is not just replacing one addiction for another. [online]. Available: <http://www.choopersguide.com/article/why-opioid-substitution-therapy-is-not-just-replacing-one-addiction-for-another-ost.html> (Accessed 18 October 2021);
- Gantly, D. (2012) Fall in the waiting list numbers for opioid substitution therapy. Irish Medical Times. [online]. Available: <https://www.imt.ie/news/fall-in-the-waiting-list-numbers-for-opioid-substitution-therapy-08-08-2012/> (Accessed 18 October 2021);
- Johnson, B. & Richert, T. (2019) *Non-prescribed use of methadone and buprenorphine prior to opioid substitution treatment: lifetime prevalence, motives, and drug sources among people with opioid dependence in five Swedish cities*. Harm Reduction Journal 16:31. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-019-0301-y> (Accessed 07 October 2021);
- Markard, T. (2020) 'Opioids in America, Part 1: Background of an epidemic', Greeley Tribune. [online]. Available: <https://www.greeleytribune.com/2020/10/10/opioids-in-america-part-1-background-of-an-epidemic/> (Accessed 29 March 2021);
- N.a., (2018) *Opioid substitution therapy in Kazakhstan: how to realize the right to accessibility*. [online]. Available from http://en.ef-ca.kz/news/fond/Opioid_substitution_therapy_in_K (Accessed 18 October 2021);
- N.a., (n.d.) *County Map of England*. [online]. Available from <https://www.picturesofengland.com/mapofengland/counties-map.html> (Accessed 30 September 2021);
- N.a., (n.d.) *Ethypharm*. [online]. Available from <https://www.ethypharm.co.uk/product/> (Accessed 07 October 2021);
- N.a., (n.d.) *Methadone*. [online]. Available from <https://dan247.org.uk/type/Methadone/> (Accessed 07 October 2021);
- N.a., (n.d.) *Opioid Substitution Treatment*. [online]. Available from <https://info.harmreduction.eu/toolbox/available-courses/ost> (Accessed 18 October 2021);
- Neale, J., Tompkins, C.N.E. & Strang, J. (2019) Prolonged-release opioid agonist therapy: qualitative study exploring patients' views of 1-week, 1-month, and 6-month buprenorphine formulations. Harm Reduction Journal 16:25. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-019-0296-4> (Accessed 07 October 2021);
- Public Health England. (2020) *COVID-19: guidance for commissioners and providers of services for people who use drugs or alcohol*;
- Yoganathan, P., Claridge, H., Chester, L., Englund, A., Kalk, N. & Copeland, C. (2021) *Synthetic cannabinoid-related deaths in England, 2012-2019*. OSF.