

New data shows rising repeat ER visits for opioid-related emergencies

12 February 2020

The emergency department is being increasingly utilized as a patient's best or only treatment option for opioid use disorder (OUD). New analysis in *Annals of Emergency Medicine* shows that the prevalence of patients who visited emergency departments at four Indiana hospital systems for repeat opioid-related emergencies jumped from 8.8 percent of all opioid-related visits in 2012 to 34.1 percent in 2017—nearly a four-fold increase in just five years.

"Emergency departments are vital partners in treatment for opioid disorders. Less frequently discussed is the value of emergency department data that can be applied to predict and prevent emergencies among at-risk patients," said Casey P. Balio, Ph.D. candidate at IU Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at IUPUI and lead study author. "Because the ED is such an important site for care, we need to identify opportunities for treatment and support that help increase efficiency across systems of care and benefit patients."

Patients with greater numbers of previous opioid-related ED visits, previous unique number hospital systems for which they've had an ED encounter, heroin use being documented at the encounter, those insured by Medicaid or uninsured relative to privately insured were more likely to have a future [emergency department](#) encounter for opioid-related emergencies, according to the analysis.

The analysis of 9,295 patients in four Indiana hospital systems was conducted with data from a statewide regional Health Information Exchange system that examined prescription history, visit detail, and community characteristics.

"Consolidating patient information from multiple emergency departments can improve risk assessment and help identify more opportunities to provide patients with treatment, particularly those who have multiple ED visits for opioid-related

health emergencies. More effective use of [health](#) information can enable more efficient care for these individuals," said Balio.

More information: Casey P. Balio et al, Opioid-Related Emergency Department Encounters: Patient, Encounter, and Community Characteristics Associated With Repeated Encounters, *Annals of Emergency Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.annemergmed.2019.12.005](#)

Provided by American College of Emergency Physicians

APA citation: New data shows rising repeat ER visits for opioid-related emergencies (2020, February 12) retrieved 22 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-02-er-opioid-related-emergencies.html>

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